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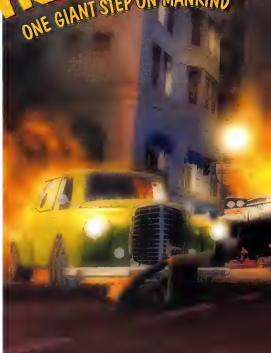
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## FEATURES

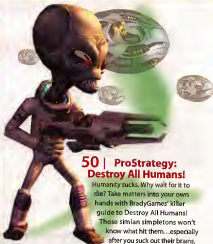
### ON THE COVER 28 | Next-Generation Warfare

Video gamers love the strategy, tactical challenge, and pure adrenaline rush of combat. Here's a look at 11 war games—both real and imagined—all set in modern times from World War II to present day.



### 48 | The Xbox 360 Comes Around

Microsoft is first out of the gate with its next-generation video-game console. Take a preliminary peek at the Xbox 360 to see how you will be playing games very soon.



### 50 | ProStrategy: Destroy All Humans!

Humanity sucks. Why wait for it to die? Take matters into your own hands with BradyGames' killer guide to *Destroy All Humans!* Those simian simpletons won't know what hit them...especially after you suck out their brains.

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One day, the roots of advanced video-game graphics just might be traced back to ray-tracing. Find out why and how here.

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There's only one Tony Montana, and thankfully he has agreed to reprise his role in the game... sort of.

...And more!

NICE SHIRT BUDDY!



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THIS MONTH:

**PRINCE OF PERSIA 3**  
The third time's the charm for this time-slicing 3D action game, which features a new, free-to-play fighting system and two playable characters.

**BURNOUT REVENGE**  
See extended driving and street racing in the next installment of EA's adrenaline-soaked racing series.

**STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR**  
With Episode III fresh in everyone's minds, LucasArts is slated to (finally) release an RTS built from the ground up. Check out the latest units and features on GamePro.com.

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## The Best of Times for Games

It never fails. Just as new console hardware like the Xbox 360 rears its prodigious head over the horizon, developers and designers who are creating games for the current generation of consoles begin to make a run of great stuff. One would think that console manufacturers (Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo) would get their best and brightest hands up and running near top speed at the start of a system's life cycle... but it never works out that way.

But the creative juices just keep flowing. As developers continue to mine the power of current technology, GamePros can look forward to great experiences ahead—with some old "friends." The Next-Generation Warfare cover feature this issue, for example, is loaded with power-packed sequels. Don't miss Call of Duty 2, Medal of Honor: European Assault, Full Spectrum Warrior 2.0, and SOCOM 3—to name a few. Road-savvy driving franchises like Burnout Revenge, Midnight Club 3, and L.A. Rush are turning it up a notch as they take fans down new streets and highways. Prince of Persia 3 continues the amazing "comeback" of that series. The list of top-notch sequels and familiar video-game characters also includes Madden NFL 06, Fantasy Star Universe, and even Katamari Damacy 2.

The aforementioned games look and play better than they ever have, but software designers are in no way just sitting on their hands. Forza Motorsport, Killer 7, Jade Empire, and Blazing Angels show that there's plenty of fresh material and gameplay yet to be discovered. Read about all these in this issue of GamePro, and wonder at the things to come.

The GamePro  
Oakland, CA  
letters@gamepro.com

at a premium these days, it's tough to justify multiple-system reviews, especially when the game versions are similar. You're more likely to find each version reviewed on GamePro.com. What do the rest of you readers say? Your wish is our command.

## Too Easy To Be Hard

I've been playing a lot of classic video games lately (I just got an NES along with about 30 games). I think that video games back then were a lot harder than they are now. At first, I thought they actually might be easier because their controllers are so simple with the A and B buttons, and directional pad, but I was very wrong. I'm a little worried that games in the future will be far too easy. The challenge of video games is a big part of what makes them so great, and if challenge levels continue to go down, the great world of video games will go down with it!

► Eric Garde—Via Internet

Your argument could be valid for specific games, but the debate is on hold until you reveal those to us. Overall, video games have become much more sophisticated with increasingly complex and challenging levels. It's more likely that medium- and easy-skill levels are being tuned down to enable newcomers and first-timers more access to games.

## Reflections Of A Sony Fanboy

I'm 20 years old now, and I've been a PlayStation fanboy since I was in the sixth grade. So while I'll readily admit that I'm a bit biased, I have to say that I truly favor the PSP over the DS. I'm pretty confident that I would feel the same way even if I were viewing the systems from a completely objective standpoint. I was proud to be one of the first in our country to own a PSP, and I am a little baffled as to why the DS was welcomed so much more warmly stateside. I think that the best DS games will be the ones that use the touch screen as more of a side function than as the center point of the gameplay. Maybe some games will come along and prove me wrong, but so far, I'm very unimpressed with the game mechanics in DS games that I've read about. The PSP, meanwhile, focuses on providing a gaming experience that fans of consoles are comfortable with, and it pushes the envelope as far as what we can expect from handheld systems.

► Walrus Man—Via Internet

You sounded good until you let on that you've only been "reading" about DS gameplay. Regardless if you prefer one system over another, it's really about the games and the hands-on enjoyment you get from playing them. Right?

## Return of the King

Hey, GamePro! I'd like to let you know that you did a good job on your 200th issue! I'd been a subscriber since 2000 and stopped my subscription around 2003, when you changed the look of the magazine. I didn't like the new look (everything was so...bland, colorless, and empty), and I felt the overall quality went down. So, I was walking through the store today and saw that GamePro had finally reached its 200th issue. I picked it up for old-times sake, and wow, was I surprised! I like the new look. I feel the overall quality has gone back up (although it still seems a little bit colorless), and there's much more content in the magazine. I also like the gallery of covers you put in the issue. It took me back to 2001, when you did that with the 150th issue. I'd just like to say good work on returning GamePro to what I feel it once was...one of my favorite magazines! I'll become a subscriber to GamePro once more!

► David Thurman—Via Internet

Welcome back, David—stay tuned for more!

## The New GamePro?

I have been a huge GamePro fan since 1993, and I have every issue since then. I have always thought your magazine is far and away the most informative, the most interesting, and definitely the most professional (some competing magazines honestly read like junior-high students wrote them). I really enjoyed the 200th issue retrospective, and I must say that I absolutely love the new look of the magazine. It is probably my favorite layout ever with the possible exception of when I first started reading it back in 1993 (although that might just be nostalgia talking). One small request: When a game is released on multiple platforms, please include ratings for all the platforms. Congratulations on the first 200 issue, and here's looking to the next 200!

► Aaron Stamboulch—Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Thanks for the kudos...and thanks for reigniting an ongoing debate. With page space and game-playing time



Letter of the Month

Matt shows that true friendship between hardcore gamers is something to be earned and cherished. For that, he gets a Logitech Cordless Action Controller.

## How Should a Game Be Played?

My buddy and I were chit-chatting about games during lunch. "Have you finished (GTA) San Andreas yet?" he asked. When I told him I hadn't, he responded with something along the lines of, "You must be the slowest player ever." I asked, "Are you 100-percent done?" He replied, "No, the percentage doesn't matter; I finished the game." Thus began the debate that sent bits of lunch meat flying from our mouths. All he completed were the main missions, while I explored and tried to find the easter eggs and stuff. He thought that beating a game as fast as you could is all that matters. I told him if he just sped through games then he would not be able to truly appreciate what the developers created. Is there really any satisfaction in playing a game so fast and then forgetting it right away? Does it make someone a better person if he can finish a game in a short amount of time?

► Matt L.—Via Internet

Beating a game doesn't make you a better person. You are both describing two different ways of enjoying games. Maybe you two should spend a few lunch sessions at different ends of the cafeteria or express your friendly aggressions in a head-to-head matchup.





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## HEAD2HEAD

### God of Where?

I have a simple and fairly pointless question. The preview for God of War (see Sneak Previews, page 46, June 2004) says that it was created by the same people who developed the Twisted Metal series. But the developer for God of War was listed as SCEA Santa Monica, while the developer for Twisted Metal: Black was listed as Incog Inc. Entertainment (see ProReviews, page 90, August 2001). It seems like Twisted Metal: Head On (which by itself is enough reason to own a PSP) was developed simultaneously with God of War by Incognito Games. So out of pure curiosity, I wonder: What's the deal? Does the company have two names, or was God of War developed mostly by a different company with some of Twisted Metal's creators sitting in on the project?

► Rosm—Via Internet

Oh, fun! Let's untangle this. Twisted Metal: Head On for the PSP was developed by Incognito Entertainment, which is the current name of the outfit in Salt Lake City, UT that used to be Incog and indeed lays claim to the Twisted Metal lineage. Incognito Games is an entirely different developer—it makes cell phone games in England. Your confusion regarding God of War leads directly to David Jaffe, who once was the creative director for Twisted Metal and Twisted Metal: Black at Incog. He developed God of War at Sony's Santa Monica studio.

### Axe the Axe

I am writing in regards to the Axe Touch ad in the 200th issue, May. I am horrified that you would accept an advertisement that provides what amounts to soft-core porn for a magazine whose audience is largely made up of teenagers. Have you no sense of responsibility for your magazine's content? The ad's own mockery of a warning ("Content is of a mature and extremely arousing nature and may contain images of saucy coeds, sexy stewardesses and other hotties. This software may be deemed unfit for some minors, spinsters, parents, happily married couples, or anyone residing in regions where caning is still practiced.") blatantly admits that it is not fit for minors, while at the same time, it entices said minors to view its content! Get a spine, and just say "no" to unfit advertising. Or learn from the past—see Cover Feature, page 49, May, in which you have the article "Bad Ads," which shows your not-so-smart acceptances of ads in the past. Gaming is about the games—not sex.

► Luke Denly—Via Internet

BAH! I NEED NO AXE!

## READER REVIEW

### Jade Empire

Combining an Asian-style mythology with martial arts, Jade Empire is an RPG epic I've played many games that have combined martial arts with the RPG genre, but Jade Empire pushes the genre up to the next level with the most realistic RPG experience ever! I'll start off by saying that the presentation, production quality, and orchestral, faulad music is first rate. The characters are some of the smartest in any video game and will be rambored for a long time. The combat engine is unique and fresh. Of course, the game has problems that keep it from attaining a perfect score. The control's can be clunky at times, especially when you are moving in between the fighting sequences. Also, there are some camera-angle issues that occasionally detract from the fun. But these are the only downsides to this masterpiece. RPG fanatics will drool all over Jade Empire. It doesn't last forever, but there is a ton of fun to be found in this game. —bbcf



downsides to this masterpiece. RPG fanatics will drool all over Jade Empire. It doesn't last forever, but there is a ton of fun to be found in this game. —bbcf

Game Factor 4.5

Agree? Disagree? Or just think you can do better? Write your own user reviews at [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com), and maybe you'll see your opinions here next.

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**SKECHERS**

# BUYERS BEWARE

With every new hardware launch, there are bound to be some growing pains. We're all excited about the PSP, but while it's a great system, it's not without its flaws. Read on for some of the more common complaints.



## PSP Player

I love my PSP but am finding manually importing photos and music from my Mac to the PSP to be tedious. I have yet to figure out how to transfer movies successfully even after converting them to mpeg-4 files as instructed in the manual. Is there a third-party application out there that can do all this for me?

► Sean MacLellan—Union City, CA

You're in luck, Sean! Even though Sony hasn't created any first-party software for the PSP's multimedia functions, independent programmers have jumped all over the PSP and created simple-to-use applications to do everything for you. We've found AnSkSoft's iSPS

(kissakura.com) and Nullriver's PSPware (nullriver.com) to be extremely useful in syncing your PSP to the Mac and transferring music from iTunes and photos from iPhoto, as well as converting movie files to the proper format and uploading them to your PSP almost instantaneously. Both applications offer free demos, and for \$20, you can download the full version. There's more PSP action in the works as programmers are working on different applications to take advantage of the PSP's Wi-Fi capabilities, including IRC chat, web browsing, AOL Instant Messenger, and more. Keep an eye out for future updates in Loading and on GamePro.com.



## Wi-Fi Woes

I am having trouble connecting my PSP online. I have a Wireless Linksys G Router, and everything shows up fine. The signal strength is always at least 80 percent, but when I test the connection or try to connect, it says, "A network connection error has occurred. (80410D09)." I really want to play it online. Can you guys help?

► Jonathan—Via Internet

Sounds like you've got some configuration problems there, Jonathan. It's important to note that the PSP does not support WPA encryption—and although it supposedly supports WEP encryption, lots of people have been reporting problems with WEP

functionality. Make sure the WEP key on the PSP matches that of your access point. If WEP is disabled on your router, make sure it's disabled on your PSP as well. To get into your router's configuration utility, you'll need to know the router's IP address—check your manual, or call technical support for your router manufacturer.

Your PSP will also need to find the SSID of your router. If you know what it is, you can enter it manually. Or if you choose to let the PSP scan and find it automatically, make sure the router is set to broadcast its SSID.

If you're still having problems, you might also try enabling "Open Network Security" in your access point's security settings. Another thing is changing the channel (channel 11

## All Pixelated Out

I purchased a brand-new Sony PSP on the day it launched only to find out that it had three dead pixels brand new out of the box. I called Sony's customer service line to see what can be done. The person I talked to told me that my unit might be exchanged for a refurbished unit and the refurbished unit might have the same problem, and that there was no guarantee of getting a unit that did not have any dead pixels. I feel this is unacceptable. People are paying \$250 for a PSP system.

► Alan Manning—Via Internet

Ah, it's always sad when pixels die. And even more sadly, there's not a whole lot you can do about it. Once they're dead, they're... dead and gone.

According to Sony, dead pixels—those tiny little grey or black dots on the screen—are normal with LCD screens. It's not a malfunction, but it is an unfortunate side effect of the technology. If you have an LCD monitor for your computer, then you know you can get dead



pixels on it, too. The PSP manual stipulates that the year's warranty will cover replacement of the units that experience such issues.

There's no guarantee, however, that your new unit won't have the same problem!

Nintendo's DS also uses an LCD screen, but consumers report far fewer problems with the displays. Him, wonder why? Stay tuned for more updates on this issue on GamePro.com.



Illustration: Amy Dutton

seems to be the magic channel). Also, make sure your router supports the 802.11b protocol.

There are some helpful support forums that discuss these PSP wireless issues. Try searching on Google

for "80410D09+PSP," and you should come up with quite a few hints, tips, and tricks. Good luck!

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XBOX LIVE

# The GAMEPRO TOP 100 BEST VIDEO-GAME FRANCHISES

## #6 Doom

Developed by id Software

What's YOUR  
Top 10? Visit  
[GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com) and  
let the GamePro  
audience know!

10  
DOME MAN

9  
C. STEVENIA

8  
STARFIGHTER

7  
HIT & GLASS

6  
DOOM

To continue our Top 10 Franchises list that we started in the March issue, here's #6. One rule was made before we chose a series: For a franchise to be considered, it had to have more than one sequel. So don't bother sending hate mail in regards to Halo, Half-Life, The Sims, and other omissions—they will be eligible next time.

What started as a modest shareware file evolved into one of the most popular and influential first-person shooters ever created. Doom was an edge-of-your-seat intense blastfest that pitted you against monsters, ghouls, and various demonic misfits. Because your goal was simple—to just stay alive—Doom's skeletal story was never really fleshed out. Initially, it had something to do with space marines stationed on the Martian moon of Phobos. The trouble started when a gate to Hell somehow opened and unleashed the forces of evil...you get the idea. That's where your rough, tough space marine entered the picture. As the last surviving human (a theme that was later revisited in countless other FPS games), your only friends were the vast array of scattered weapons (including shotguns, chain guns, and the mother-of-them-all, the BFG 9000), mystic relics, and your own frayed nerves.

The deeper you delved into the game, the more plentiful and horrific your enemies became. But there was a method (and strategy) to the madness as monsters could be easily lured to fight one another and some seemingly dead ends required brainpower in the form of puzzle-solving skills. It also introduced some of the most frightening monsters in video-game history, including the towering rocket-launcher-packing Cyberdemon, whose thunderous hooves could almost be felt as it took

each step. Or the Spider Demon Mastermind, a giant blob of brain mounted atop four cybernetic legs (complete with audible piston-like hiss) and a chain gun mounted below its devilish mug that could chew you to pieces in seconds.

These and other beasts were true nightmares, and plenty of bloodletting added to the impact—whether it was killing an enemy at the end of a shotgun muzzle or the whirling blades of a handheld chainsaw. Atmosphere wasn't in short supply either as the graphics were awash with blazing skies, creepy engravings, and pools of blood that added to the sense of oppression and unease. Another key feature was multiplayer competition, or "deathmatches," where you could take on other players via system link or modem.

The sequel, Doom II, made everything bigger, louder, scarier, and more intense as the setting moved to Earth (don't ask) in the form of new levels, more monsters, and—yes—more weapons. The developers even cleverly concealed playable levels from their previous project, Castle Wolfenstein, within Doom II's massive architectural designs. With Doom 3, the series achieved a graphical benchmark, and the game (nicely) held its own against several franchises that it inspired, including Half-Life 2 and Unreal 2.—Major Mike

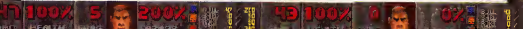
Fear is the foundation of the Doom series, and the third, most recent game is no exception.



The earliest Doom: Special PlayStation Edition compiled both the PC Doom games and even added many of Doom II's new features (like the Double Barreled Shotgun and the Chainsaw zombies) into the first Doom.

### Key Entries in the Doom Series

- ☐ Doom (PC, 1993)
- ☐ Doom II (PC, 1994)
- ☐ Doom (Jaguar, 1994)
- ☐ Ultimate Doom (PC, 1995)
- ☐ Doom: Special PlayStation Edition (1995)
- ☐ Doom (SNES, 1996)
- ☐ Final Doom (PC/PlayStation, 1996)
- ☐ Doom 64 (Nintendo 64, 1997)
- ☐ Doom 3 (PC, 2004)
- ☐ Doom 3: Limited Collector's Edition (Xbox, 2005)
- ☐ Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil (PC, 2005)







## Ray-Tracing: The Next Wave In Graphics?

Graphic technology keeps advancing at a blistering rate, and ray-tracing is back in the headlines. Is this a sneak peek at what future PlayStation and Xbox consoles will be capable of doing?

Way back in 1998, the rumor mill suggested that Sony's upcoming PlayStation 2 system would make use of a new-fangled graphics technology called ray-tracing. Those rumors turned out to be dead wrong, but they made for fascinating conjecture, especially because graphic geeks consider ray-tracing to be a sort of Holy Grail for game visuals. But just what is ray-tracing? According to Andy Wardley's (et al) absurdly detailed ray-tracing FAQ\*, ray-tracing is an advanced rendering system that mathematically calculates individual light rays as they bounce around a 3D world. If this technology were harnessed to power a video game, you'd see insanely sophisticated reflections (for perfect shiny surfaces and mirrors), refractions, and life-like soft shadows.

Compared to ray-tracing, current graphic technology is crude at best. Programmers use techniques like light-mapping to simulate realistic lighting. Even Doom 3's eye-popping rendering engine can't touch it—it's a brilliant hack job, but it can't even approach the accuracy and realism of ray-tracing. So why don't we see ray-tracing graphics used in video games? Because normal game graphic technology has one crucial advantage: pure speed.

Ray-tracing is an unbelievably complex process—it can take hours or days to perform the calculations for just one scene, what with all those

This is simply impossible using current technology. Note the smooth, seamless distortion in the background.



light rays bouncing around—and unless you want really, really long load times in your games, real-time ray-tracing isn't a realistic option. Yet. Using the OpenRT ray-tracing engine, students from Saarland University and Erlangen University in Germany have made serious headway in getting a ray-traced version of Quake 3: Arena running in real time (with the help of 20 Athlon XP processors, that is). It's purely experimental and definitely not ready for prime time, but Quake 3: Ray-Traced does provide a fascinating look into the future of gaming graphics. —Vicarious Sid

\*<http://www.cg.tu-muen.ac.at/rayfaq/>

All screen shots courtesy of "Ray Tracing in 3D EgoShooters" found at <http://graphics.cs.uni-sb.de/~sldgph/egoshooters/>

## DVD INSIDER

## Summer Releases

Tired of long box-office lines? Here are some live-action and animated features to keep you entertained.

### Casino: 10th Anniversary Edition

Before the corporations took over, the mob had their way in Las Vegas, and who better to show sin city during this time than Martin Scorsese? *Casino* reunites the director with his GoodFellas stars, Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci, for this lengthy (almost three-hour) look at corruption, crime, and greed. Sharon Stone (in an Oscar-nominated performance) and James Woods also star. The 10th Anniversary Edition is a two-disc set packed with bonus extras like deleted scenes, audio commentary, documentaries, and other features. *Universal Home Video • Available now*



### Blade: Trinity

The last in the *Blade* trilogy, *Trinity* gets New Line's Platinum Series treatment. Forced into daylight by the FBI, vampire-killer Blade (Wesley Snipes) is joined by two human vampire hunters in his quest to track down the original vampire, Dracula. *Blade: Trinity* is being issued in its theatrical R-rated version and an Unrated edition with 10 minutes of additional footage and a DTS 6.1 surround audio track. Extras for both versions include a blooper reel, alternate ending, galleries, and documentaries. *New Line Home Video • Available now*



### Applesauce

Following World War III, most of humanity is concentrated in Olympus, a city run by a giant supercomputer. When militaristic terrorists take control of the city, war ensues and only one person knows how to stop it. A fan favorite following its limited theatrical release, *Applesauce* features an innovative cross of motion-capture technology and CG animation, and the DVD is being issued in a standard and Limited Collector's Edition (with a metal case). Both editions feature Japanese and English audio tracks, and DTS 5.1 surround. *Genie Entertainment • Available now*



## Retro Corner

10 Years ago  
(July 1995)...

## ...in GamePro

- Acclaim's *Judge Dredd* was the main cover image of our 138-page July 1995 issue. The cover was backed by ProReviews of the SNES, Genesis, and Game Gear versions of the game, along with a one-page preview on the motion picture.
- Mortal Kombat 3* was Hot at the Arcades.
- No game received a perfect score, but *Phantom 2040* (SNES), *Lemmings 2: The Tribes* (SNES), *Jungle Strike* (SNES), *Fatal Fury 3: Road to the Final Victory* (Neo-Geo), *Kyle Petty's No Fear Racing*



(SNES), *The Next Glory: Super Sidekicks 3* (Neo-Geo), *Kirby's Dream Land 2* (Game Boy) all got high marks. *Panic* (Sega CD) was the big loser with a 1.0 Fun Factor rating.

- Shredfest* (Saturn) was previewed; however, the game, developed by Electronic Arts, would never see the light of day.
- Lone Soldier* (PlayStation), *Motor Toon Grand Prix* (PlayStation), *Virtua Hydlide* (Saturn), *The Ooze* (Genesis), and *Comanche* (SNES) were highlights from the 1995 Europe Computer Trade Showcase (ECTS) in the U.K.



Donkey Kong Country



Triple Play Baseball '96



World Series Baseball '95

## ...in Gaming

- Developed by Crystal Dynamics, *Gex* (3DO) surpassed the 1 million sales mark.
- Capcom sold the publishing rights for *Street Fighter: The Movie* for the PlayStation and Saturn to Acclaim. Lucky them.

## ...in Sales

Here are the top five-selling games:

1. *Donkey Kong Country* (Nintendo/SNES)
2. *Triple Play Baseball '96* (EA Sports/Genesis)
3. *World Series Baseball '95* (Sega Sports/Genesis)
4. *The Lion King* (Virgin Interactive/SNES)
5. *Mortal Kombat II* (Acclaim/SNES)

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/Point-of-Sale

## GP LABS

## Resident Evil 4 Chainsaw Controller

Talk about horrors—just one look at this thing is enough to induce nightmares. For those of you who just couldn't get enough of *Resident Evil 4*, NubyTech is issuing a limited number of controllers in the shape of a chainsaw wielded by the maniac "chainsaw man" from the game. The controller is a wonderful display piece, and different blood splatters on



each unit make it a real collector's item. It even vibrates (it would have been really cool if the saw teeth moved, too, but you can't have everything) with a rumble feature for a "realistic chainsaw feel." The controller sits on a stand, which has a storage space beneath it for the detachable cord.

Unfortunately, aesthetics in this peripheral's most endearing trait as what must have sounded like a surefire hit in theory doesn't

work in practice. You have to hold the Chainsaw controller at a slight angle, so you are forced to make frequent glances at it in your hands to keep your bearings. It's also tough on the left wrist as your thumb on that hand—instead of the more intuitive index finger—is closest to the L button. The buttons are also located in different places than those on the standard GameCube controller, meaning that you'll face a severe learning curve.

Ultimately, this baby is more for show than play, although it would be tempting to put it to use the next time the little ones ask you to join in a game of *Mario Party 6*. —Major Mike

GameCube. Price: \$49.99  
Contact: Nuby Tech, 318/362-9718, nubytech.com

GP Labs Rating: 2.5/5

## GP LABS

## Adversarial Anniversary

Can you believe Capcom says it's been 15 years since *Street Fighter* first hit the arcades? Actually, neither can we—the launch date was actually in 1987, making this 15-year anniversary roughly two years late. Nevertheless, the *Official Street Fighter Anniversary Edition Arcade Stick* (say that three times fast) is decorated with a gorgeous mural depicting *Street Fighter II* and Alpha-series characters. The controller's joystick and buttons are responsive, but the way it mixes an American-style 'stick with Japanese-style convex-shaped buttons may throw off hardcore players. In a thoughtful touch, the controller



GP Labs Rating: 4.0/5

port is compatible with both the PS2 and Xbox. And if you're an Xbox Live Junkie, don't worry—the 'stick is also geared for online play. The main drawback is the steep price point of \$59.99.—Devon Magnum

PS2, Xbox. Price: \$59.99  
Contact: NubyTech, 318/362-9718, nubytech.com

While Capcom celebrates the 15th anniversary of *Street Fighter*, Namco's *Tekken* has finally hit the big 1-0. This Horis-designed, limited-edition *Tekken 5 Ultimate Collector's Edition* bundle is a fitting tribute. Like its *Street Fighter* counterpart, this arcade-style 'stick is graced with eye-catching character art. It's also smaller and more streamlined than the *Street Fighter* unit. The *Tekken* 'stick

boasts comfy convex buttons much like those on the *Street Fighter* 'stick. The Japanese-style joystick, however, is hypersensitive; it will take an iron fist to adapt this bad boy. The retail price is a hefty \$99.99, but that includes a copy of *Tekken 5* (easily the best entry in the series thus far) plus a cool collector's case that holds all six *Tekken* games. Only 20,000 of these Ultimate Collector's Edition bundles will be available, so get 'em while they're hot.—Devon Magnum

PS2. Price: \$99.99  
Contact: Namco, 800/na/na/na/

GP Labs Rating: 4.5/5





## The Faces Behind Scarface

Well, we can finally put one burning Scarface question to bed. There's been ongoing speculation about Al Pacino's involvement in the upcoming Scarface game (full title: Scarface: The World Is Yours). We can now confirm that Al Pacino will not provide the voice for protagonist Tony Montana. He will, however, provide his likeness, so at least the character will look as he did in Brian DePalma's hugely influential gangster film. Another, as of yet unnamed, actor will provide the voice for the bloodthirsty Tony Montana.

Publisher Vivendi Universal Games also announced other members of the Scarface game cast. Original cast members Steven Bauer (Manny Ray) and Robert Loggia (Frank Lopez) will reprise their roles, and some other familiar faces will join the cast, too. Expect to see Cheech Marin, James Woods, Michael Rappaport, and comedian Jay Mohr, along with a host of other Hollywood bit players. Look for Scarface on the PS2, Xbox, and PC this fall. —Deuce Magnum



## Import Impulse

Those who don't have the money to buy a Skyline or a 350Z, tricked out with JBL subwoofers can now own a piece of automotive cool with Jada Toys' new sleek lineup of die-cast cars.

The 1:18 scale cars come with detailed cockpits, opening doors and trunks, and intricate brakes complete with cross drilled rotors and colored calipers. The Initial D series R32 Skyline GT-R skipped a bit on the engine cockpit with a single, all-chrome plastic piece and has a slightly inaccurate turn signal headlight (it should be all orange)—otherwise the car is a faithful representation of the real thing. Import Racer Z has a more fully decorated engine bay and a high-quality custom paintjob—no cheery stickers that peel off here. Both series' toys ooze with quality and are must-haves for import car or tuner car aficionados. —Funky Zealot



## Portable Powerhouse

Toshiba's carved out quite a name for itself in the laptop sector, and its slick-looking Satellite P35-S629 further extends that reputation. Though this plus-sized laptop isn't an ideal choice for on-the-go students or professionals—at almost 10 pounds, it's too heavy—it is an excellent, affordable choice for gamers interested in a "desktop replacement" laptop.

Toshiba's brawny Satellite P35 houses a Pentium 4 3.33 GHz and 512 MB of RAM. The bright, crisp, 17-inch widescreen monitor rivals even Apple's mighty PowerBook screen, and the integrated Harmon/Kardon speakers sound loud and clear. The massive 100 GB hard drive provides plenty of storage, though performance is a bit pokey. Other awesome frills include the integrated CD/DVD burner and ultra-zippy 802.11g wireless capability. The battery life isn't amazing, but the price certainly is—only \$1,499. You'd easily pay that much for a similarly equipped desktop bundle from Dell or Gateway. If you're in the market for a robust, capable laptop, the Satellite P35 represents an outstanding bargain. —Vicous Sid

Price: \$1,499. Contact: Toshiba, toshiba.com





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## LOADING



THE CUTTING EDGE

## Vice City...Online?

Ever since Grand Theft Auto III hit the PlayStation 2, gamers everywhere have fantasized about an online-enabled version that would allow GTA players the world over to shoot, beat, and carjack each other over the Internet. That misty-eyed dream is now a sharp-edged reality, but it's not thanks to GTA developer Rockstar Games. The credit (blame?) goes to the hard-working homebrew mod authors behind Multi Theft Auto, an ingenious project that's been underway since early 2003. Somebody give these guys a job!



Multi Theft Auto modifies the PC version of GTA III or Vice City and "tricks" it into playing over a network with other players. You'll obviously get the best experience if you play over broadband Internet access, but reports indicate that even 56K users get playable performance. Though the current release is still in beta form, more improvements are on the way (and hopefully, when the time is right, we'll see support for San Andreas). You can check out their work and download the mod file at [mtavc.com](http://mtavc.com). Way to go, guys!

—Vicous Sid

All screens taken from [mtavc.com](http://mtavc.com)

[blogcore.com](http://blogcore.com)

Want to learn more about Multi Theft Auto? Let Vicous Sid show you the light.



COME TO PAPA!



NETPRO

## Playing with Xfire

It's Friendster for gamers. It's AIM for gamers. It's a server browser and a game launcher and a friend-finder. It's skinnable, customizable, and linkable. It's peer-to-peer. It's bit torrent. It's a personal stat-tracker. So many features are packed into this small, free, downloadable app that it's hard to cover everything it does. CEO Mike Cassidy and CGO (that's Chief Gaming Officer to you, pal) Dennis "Thresh" Fong came up with the idea while gaming and listening to their friends who complained they couldn't find each other on the same servers. With Xfire, you can immediately see which friends on your list are playing which games, message them without interrupting their experience, and then instantly log on to the same server with a "one-click join." But that's not the end of it. Go online and set up your profile, invite friends, see friends-of-friends, subscribe to game channels

that alert you about new demos and new patches, and set up an automatic patch update service to ensure that your games are always up to date when you want to play them. In short, it hits all the hottest buzzwords for online applications and combines them into an efficient little package. If you play online PC games, you'll wonder how you ever did without Xfire.—GameGirl

Xfire is a free download. Check it out at [xfire.com](http://xfire.com)!



## Turner Taps Into Gaming

Ted Turner—you know, the multimedia mogul who oversees a conglomerate of TV networks (TBS, TNT, CNN, and Cartoon Network) and huge publications (*Time* and *Sports Illustrated*)—is preparing another network, this time on your PC in the form of broadband entertainment. Named GameTap, this network will enable you to play past games that span from the arcade glory days and first console systems to the PlayStation era. It will be a monthly subscription service (price not yet determined), and the exact games that will be available are still pending—although Turner Broadcasting claims it already has contracted over 1000 titles from 17 publishers. The network is set to launch with 300 games this holiday season. —*Forbes* (via *PlayStation*)



GameTap creator Blake Lewis talks shop with Space Ghost.

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Cover  
Feature

# NEXT- GENERATION WARFARE



**The invasion of combat games is about to begin! We pooled our resources, checked out the best and the brightest offerings for this summer and fall, and rated each one by how promising they look.**

★★★★★ || *By The GamePros* || ★★★★★



## CALL OF DUTY 2

Developer: Infinity Ward Publisher: Activision Xbox 360, PC Available Fall 2005

**W**hat better way to unveil perhaps the most anticipated WWII shooter than to release it on the Xbox 360 as a launch title. In this sequel, you once again experience the brutality of war through multiple stories—Russian, British, and American—but with a slight change: You can either follow a particular character's story all the way to the end or play across all conflicts in chronological order from 1941 to 1945. The most appealing addition to the game, however, is the nonlinear gameplay; each area is now wide open, which enables you to effectively flank enemies as well as fulfill a variety of objectives in a different order.

The graphic engine is completely new, too. Call of Duty 2 will have sharper environmental

detail by using real-time dynamic lighting and shadows, and character animations will look much more lifelike. And although it initially may sound trivial, developer Infinity Ward is proud of its smoke effects for the game. Not only does it look and move super realistically, it also enhances the gameplay. You can use smoke (from grenade explosions to fires already set) for cover, and the enemy A.I. will adjust their fighting tactics around it. It's been two years since Call of Duty wowed

us with spectacular action that just completely blew away all the competition—here's hoping the sequel will do the same.



CONTINUED ►



## \*War\* Heroes

We also take a look at the classic war franchises of the past and present. The games featured in this section are some of the most influential ever made, and as such, deserve special mention.



### CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN SERIES

In 1981, Muse Software released a top-down 2D action game, Castle Wolfenstein for the Apple II. As a captured Allied soldier, you had to escape the famed Nazi stronghold by killing enemies and using disguises. The sequel, Beyond Castle Wolfenstein, sent you on a mission to assassinate Hitler and the Nazi top command. More than a decade later, the series was revived as a first-person shooter with the groundbreaking Wolfenstein 3D. In 2001, the series struck again with Return to Castle Wolfenstein, which put you in the role of a special operations officer who had to thwart a series of horrific Nazi experiments and sabotage special weapons programs. Wolfenstein excelled in that it could retain the historical framework of World War II but add outlandish, supernatural elements.

## **MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT**

■ Developer: EALA ■ Publisher: EA Games ■ PS2, Xbox, GameCUBE ■ Available June



**A**s a representative of one of the franchises that kicked military combat action games into high gear, Medal of Honor: European Assault reveals its much-needed upgrades. You play an O.S.S. officer assigned to the British and participate in four campaigns based on actual WWII battles, but your quest for German secrets uncovers a terrible weapon of mass destruction.

First of all—take cover! This version is tougher thanks to wicked enemy A.I., a 360-degree gameplay area, and an absence of save points—instead, you have to find health and revive power-ups to heal your wounds. You're also not alone in this war. You command a squad of three men, and you're not going to survive without them, either. European Assault just might earn a medal.



## **CALL OF DUTY: BIG RED ONE**

■ Developer: Treyarch/Infinity Motion ■ Publisher: Activision  
 ■ PS2, Xbox, GameCUBE ■ Available Fall 2005

**T**he American First Infantry Division, or Big Red One, saw action in North Africa and Sicily, and they also took part in the D-Day invasion. This Call of Duty entry will put you in the boots of a soldier for all three campaigns in one linear narrative. If this sounds like "business as usual," you'd be right, but the final product promises touches of authenticity, such as realistic squad and cover tactics, and the introduction of new rifles, machine guns, and pistols to the skirmishes.



### **SEE THE MOVIE**

Director Sam Fuller's 1960 war film, *The Big Red One*, was re-constructed last year with an additional 45 minutes of footage and is available in a two-disc edition.

Warner Home Video  
 Available now

CONTINUED ►



## **\*War\* Heroes**

### **CALL OF DUTY SERIES**

The Call of Duty franchise represents a "second front" of WWII war games that followed in the path of the Medal of Honor series. The games succeeded in re-creating first-person-shooter combat just a bit tighter and offering graphics and animation that were a little more precise. A great gameplay feature of the series is the ability to play as a variety of soldiers in different or concurrent story lines.



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and select the  
Gameloft title  
of your choice

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and start  
playing!!



## BLAZING ANGELS: SQUADRONS OF WWII

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal Publisher: Ubisoft Xbox Available Fall 2005



It's a saturated breed on the PC, but on consoles—in particular the Xbox—air combat shooters are a rarity. Filling that void this fall is *Blazing Angels*, but don't discount it as just a routine flight. A WWII aerial game, *Blazing Angels* re-creates some of the war's most gripping airborne battles like Pearl Harbor, the bombing of Berlin, and the battle for England. The traditional build-up-your-pilot-from-recruit-to-a-ace campaign with the ability to command your own squad is here—however, it's the lure of flying in 40 different airplanes and head-to-head Xbox Live dogfights that's truly whetting our flying appetite.



## COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE

Developer: Pyros Studios Publisher: Eidos PS2, Xbox, PC Available Summer 2005



**C**ommandos is making an intriguing tactical maneuver with *Strike Force*. It's moving from third-person view, real-time, World War II tactical game to first-person WWII shooter. Pyros Studios remains the developer, although this is its first FPS. As the German army stands poised at the English Channel, Winston Churchill gives the go-ahead for a new type of fast-hitting, rapid-response fighting force led by...you. You can divvy up the gameplay and strategy among three types of soldiers selectable at any time: Spy (for stealth), Sniper (long-range attacks), and Green Beret (the insignia of the Corps of Royal Marines, forbearers to the U.S. Green Berets). The *Commandos* franchise has friends and foes aplenty, and given the new gameplay style you'd probably be smart to wait and see how the battle unfolds.



CONTINUED ►

## \*War\* Heroes

### ACES OF THE PACIFIC/ACES OVER EUROPE

Back when flight simulators were as common as RPGs, Sierra Studio's *Dynafix* ruled the skies with its critically acclaimed *Aces* series. Both games were known for their unprecedented lineup of fighters and bombers as well as a meaty campaign system. Flight model inaccuracies aside, even recent sims like *Pacific Fighters* have yet to approach the comprehensive experience that these games offered.



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## SNIPER ELITE

Developer: Rebellion Publisher: Namco PS2, Xbox Available fourth quarter 2005



**D**uring World War II, Allied forces never "took" Berlin—that job was left to the Russians, who were more than happy to add any conquered land to their "evil empire." As a highly trained sniper in the OSS, your mission is to infiltrate war-torn Berlin and stop the Russian secret service from stealing deadly atomic-bomb technology. Alternating between first- and third-person perspectives, you'll use various disguises, stealth, and a precise trigger-finger to take out enemies and retrieve the plans. Sniper Elite will feature 28 missions in its one-player game; up to two gunners can go at it in co-op and death modes via split-screen; and the game will also support online. Sniper looks like an interesting twist on urban warfare (a



kind of playable version of the movie *Enemy at the Gates*) and a welcome departure from the deluge of squad-based titles that are so commonplace today.



## DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN

Developer: Cinemac Publisher: Neologic PS2, Xbox Available fall 2005

**B**lack Hawk Down made serious waves on the PC, and now Neologic's bringing the battle to the home front. In a wise move, the developers have retooled the game to better focus on the unique strengths of the Xbox and the PS2. The Xbox version sports the dearest, most detailed graphics. The PS2

version, however, features an exclusive RPG-esque skill system that enables soldiers to upgrade skills like marksmanship and dexterity. Massive online multiplayer match-ups are a major focus for both versions: The PS2 version supports 32 players, while



CONTINUED ►



## \*War\* Heroes

## SECRET WEAPONS SERIES

LucasArts produced one of the finest flight-combat sims in the early 1990s for the PC. Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe. The game allowed wannabe ace pilots to fly Allied and Axis planes—including some of the first jet combat aircraft made by the German air force (Luftwaffe) in the waning days of WWII. After a few "expansion plane" additions, the series went into hibernation until it was finally thawed in a 2001 "Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe" remaster for the PC, Xbox, and PS2.





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SOMETIMES  
THE  
HUMAN  
RACE  
HAS TO  
START  
OVER...

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## BATTALION WARS

Developer: Nippon Entertainment, Intelligent Systems Publisher: Nintendo GameCube Available August



**B**attalion Wars began its life as *Advance Wars: Under Fire*—the name change signifies just how far removed this incarnation is from its predecessors. *Advance Wars* on the Game Boy Advance was a brilliantly crafted game, at its core—stripping away the “plot” and the animated characters—a deep strategy game as elegant and intellectually rewarding as chess. *Battalion Wars* drops the turn-based strategy, and by taking the gameplay into a 3D world, risks denaturing the game beyond recognition. Although the player still controls a squad, the ability to plan several moves in advance is erased. Instead, quick thinking and decisive action are key. *Battalion Wars* is not a sequel but a spinoff—it’s to *Advance Wars* as *Joey* is to *Friends*. Which is fine

if you like *Joey*, the simplest, silliest, but also the most easy-going of the bunch.



## BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

Developer: Digital Warfare/EA GDC Publisher: EA Games PS2, Xbox Available Fall 2005



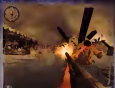
**I**t’s PC brethren still takes top honors as one of the best massively multiplayer first-person shooters. But like its upcoming PC counterpart, *Battlefield 2* on the console has been marred with delays that raise concerns of the game’s integrity among the ranks. Rest assured that at least the online play already seems to be running smoothly. It’s the single-player game, however, that has us worried. The gameplay is a mix of using real-world equipment and authentic modern-day setting with arcade action where performing kill combos will give you more points to unlock upgrades and promotions. Different ways to complete objectives is the main draw, as well as the ability to control every single vehicle you see on the battlefield.



## MEDAL OF HONOR SERIES

Developer: EA GDC Publisher: EA Games PS2, Xbox Available Fall 2005

that it was one of the first mainstream first-person shooters set during World War II to take its subject seriously (plus, its arrival in the wake of the movie *Saving Private Ryan* didn’t hurt either). Successive Medal games have examined other events of World War II, including combat in the Pacific (Resistance), and island-hopping on Iwo Jima (in the Pacific (Resistance)).





# KUMA WAR

Developer and publisher: Kuma Reality Games ■ PC ■ Available now

Does it seem creepy to be able to play actual U.S. Army missions just months after they happened? Kuma Reality Games is betting that you'll be intrigued enough to sign up for a free 30-day trial at kumagames.com and throw yourself into a digital re-creation of Fallujah. Single-player mode is perfect for the lone wolf, but co-op and team-based versus modes are also available. At press time, Kuma Reality Games was working on *Stories from the Front: Baghdad Conway*, which is based on Sergeant Major James Roth's account of a rescue mission in April 2004.



Is it questionable propaganda or an innovative, interactive exploration of what U.S. soldiers actually went through? Hmm...we should start to worry if the bullets become real.



## UNDER ASH

An Arab-world counterpart to American reality war games exists in *Under Ash* (*UnderSiege* in North America and Europe). Developed by a Syrian company, the downloadable third-person shooter takes its missions from the Palestinian point of view, re-creating events from 1978 through 2004. In 2003, Lebanese radical Shiite group Hezbollah also released a game, *Special Force*, which lets players take aim at Israeli forces—proving that wars of ideology can be fought virtually.

# BATTLEFIELD 2

Developer: Digital Warfare CE ■ Publisher: EA Games ■ PC ■ Available Summer 2005



Since we last checked in with *Battlefield 2*, the developers have dramatically overhauled the game's graphical performance. And the fast, fluid frame rate means that you can crank up the visual detail to eye-popping levels. Compared to past series entries, *Battlefield 2* wasn't changed too dramatically—it's still fundamentally the same game. Most notably, the new persistent ranking system rewards skillful online players with prestigious, highly visible promotions. The game also features a new array of authentic, modern-era weapons and vehicles, but the new character classes probably deserve more focus: Commanders direct the overall strategy RTS-style, while Squad leaders give tactical orders and serve as mobile spawn points. In the trenches, Medics revive and heal personnel, while Support soldiers serve as mobile ammo dumps. It all looks promising—let's hope the final version delivers the goods.



CONTINUED ►

## BATTLEFIELD 1942 SERIES

It all began with *Battlefield 1942*, a groundbreaking PC shooter that blew gamers away with its authentic arsenal (which included aircraft). *Battlefield: Vietnam* switched the rules by changing the conflict. The heavy foliage drastically altered the strategy. Now that *Battlefield* is tackling the era of modern combat, what's next for the series? Speculation suggests that the next game might be set in the future and feature advanced prototype weapons.

**\*War\* Heroes**



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# FIRE EMBLEM

## THE SACRED STONES

RenDa Township.  
Renais. Near the  
Renais-Grado border.

I HAVE BEEN A SUBJECT OF THE RENNAI KINGDOM ALL OF MY DAYS AND AN OFFICER OF KING FADO'S ROYAL ARMY SINCE I WAS OLD ENOUGH TO LIFT A SWORD.

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FOR THE PROCEEDS CANCELLED TO THIS  
COMIC AND INTO THE FIRE EMBLEM COMBAT  
FOR CUSTOMIZED ORIGINAL COMIC ART!

I HAVE BEEN TAUGHT IN THE WAYS OF WAR, BUT NEVER IN MY MANY YEARS OF KNOWING NAUGHT BUT PEACE DID I EVER CONCEIVE THAT I WOULD RAISE MY STEEL TO FIGHT A SOLDIER OF GRADO.

OVER GENERATIONS, THE COUNTRIES OF RENNAI AND GRADO FORGED THE MOST ENDURING ALLIANCE ON THIS ANCIENT CONTINENT OF MAGVEL.

NOT ONLY WAS GRADO  
OUR NEIGHBOR...

THE STRENGTH OF THIS ALLIANCE WAS SOMETHING I WITNESSED WITH MY OWN EYES WHEN KING FADO OF RENNAI AND EMPEROR VIGARDE OF GRADO SIGNED A TRADE AND DEFENSE AGREEMENT THAT BROUGHT OUR COUNTRIES EVEN CLOSER THAN THEY HAD BEEN IN THE PAST.

NOT ONLY WAS GRADO  
OUR ALLY...

GRADO WAS  
OUR FRIEND.

STORY BY KEN SIU-CHONG  
ART BY LONG VO & JEANNIE LEE  
ONLY FOR **GAME BOY ADVANCE**



Fantasy Violence

BUT ALL THAT CHANGED THIS MORNING WHEN OUR SMALL BORDER PATROL CAUGHT SIGHT OF A GROUP OF THE GRADO ARMY'S ADVANCE SCOUTS.

THEY ATTACKED WITHOUT WARNING, CHASING MY MEN BACK TO RENNAN AND MAKING IT CLEAR THAT THEY DID NOT WISH FOR NEWS OF THEIR PRESENCE WITHIN RENNAN'S BORDERS TO REACH KING FADO...

...EVEN IF IT MEANT SLAUGHTERING EVERY LAST PERSON IN THIS TOWN!

THE PRESENCE OF THESE SCOUTS AND THEIR REACTION TO THEIR DISCOVERY CAN MEAN ONLY ONE THING—GRADO HAS BETRAYED US.

AN INVASION IS IMMINENT AND, AS HARD AS IT IS TO FATHOM, THESE BORDERS THAT HAVE NOT SEEN WAR IN GENERATIONS WILL ECHO WITH THE SOUNDS OF BATTLE IN THE COMING DAYS.

THE DEFENSES GUARDING THE RENNAN-GRADO BORDER HAVE SOFTENED AFTER THE COUNTLESS YEARS OF PEACE—IT WAS THOUGHT THAT RESOURCES COULD BE SPENT ON MORE PRESSING NEEDS THAN GUARDING AGAINST AN INVASION THAT WOULD SURELY NEVER COME.

IF RENNAN IS TO OVERCOME GRADO'S INEXPLICABLE TREACHERY, THIS BATTLE IN WHICH MY MEN AND I HAVE BECOME ENTANGLED MAY BE OF GRAVER IMPORTANCE THAN WE HAD FIRST THOUGHT.

THE BORDER OUTPOSTS AND GARRISONS THAT WERE ONCE FILLED WITH LEGIONS OF SOLDIERS ARE NOW ONLY MANNED BY SMALL PATROLS SUCH AS MINE, AND IT MAY BE UPON OUR SHOULDERS THAT THE FATE OF RENNAN COULD REST.

IF WE FAIL IN THIS BATTLE, NO WORD OF GRADO'S IMPENDING INVASION WOULD REACH THE CAPITAL, ALLOWING GRADO TO STAGE A SUCCESSFUL SURPRISE ATTACK RATHER THAN FACE A FULLY PREPARED RENNAN DEFENSE.

IF RENNAN IS TO RISE ABOVE GRADO'S DISLOYALTY, THIS IS A DAY WE MUST WIN.





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# FIRE EMBLEM

## THE SACRED STONES

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FOR THE LUCKY DRAW CONTEST TO THIS  
COMIC AND ENTER THE FIRE EMBLEM CONTEST  
FOR CUSTOMIZED ORIGINAL COMIC ART!



Fantasy Violence

## CONFLICT: GLOBAL TERROR

Developer: Pivotal Games Publisher: 2K Games PS2, Xbox, PC Available October



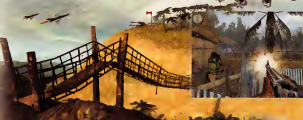
As the fourth game in the Conflict military series, Global Terror places you in a four-man squad and allows you to switch between team members at will. Unlike the last entry, Vietnam, Terror brings warfare into the 21st Century with contemporary weapons and squad-based tactics as you and your counter-terrorist specialist colleagues take on a dangerous group of neo-Nazis. The game also marks a couple of firsts for the series: It will include a female team member, and it will support online play with voice chat via headset—for all three platforms. The developer, Pivotal Games, promises a completely rewritten play engine with such enhancements as semi-assist weapon aiming, smoother textures, and improved enemy A.I.



## 6GUN

Developer: BattleGame Entertainment  
Publisher: To be determined  
PS2, Xbox, PC Available 2006

A funny game name, a relatively unknown developer, and an unannounced publisher don't make for a good first impression. Still, with an emphasis on modern special operations combat (albeit with a fictionalized story line), how can 6GUN go wrong? The most alluring part of the game will be its gameplay variety: You'll engage in close-quarters combat, rescue hostages, snipe from a helicopter, perform High Altitude Low Opening parachute insertions, and more. As a third-person tactical military shooter, 6GUN certainly sounds intriguing, but will it have enough ammo to survive the onslaught of other games like it?



## \*War\* Heroes

## VIRTUALLY VIETNAM

Vietnam-based games are growing in popularity, partially because the conflict's cultural complexity adds a uniquely edgy undercurrent. Battlefield: Vietnam and Men of Valor mined this to great effect, exploring racial and ethical tensions while bombarding players with 1960s-era music and political factoids. But it begs a thought-provoking question: In the interest of generating massive controversy, will a future game allow players to participate in, say, the Mai Lai massacre?

# AMERICA'S ARMY: RISE OF A SOLDIER

Developer: Secret Level Publisher: Ubisoft PS2, Xbox Available Summer 2005



**N**ow it's the console owner's turn to experience what PC army armchair soldiers have been experiencing over the years. In collaboration with the U.S. Army, Ubisoft is inviting you to work through the challenging ranks in the world's largest army in the single-player mode with the goal of becoming an elite Special Forces operator. This first-person shooter enables you to choose your own career path, focusing on specific roles like a sniper or grenadier, or you can switch between different positions all to build up your skills to become a team leader of an eight-man fire team and eventually a coveted Green Beret. Your campaign alone sounds promising,

but we're just hoping the online component will be just as engaging as its PC counterpart.



## FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

Developer: Pandemic Studios Publisher: THQ PS2, Xbox, PC Available Fall 2005

**N**o one knew how to classify Full Spectrum Warrior when it was first released. Is it a shooter? Is it a strategy game? Or is it both? Ultimately, no one really cared because it was the game's innovative gameplay that defined its presence. By this fall, the sequel is hoping to follow in the same creative and intense footsteps with

even more U.S. Army Infantry realism built in. One of the more notable and new features in the game enables you to command a Precision Fire toward a specific target. The trade-off, however, is

that your shooter will be exposed, which will make him an open target himself. We loved the first, and we can't wait for the second.



CONTINUED ►

## FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR SERIES

Forget about those other squad-based games: This is where you can find true team-tactical action. You work as a team and complete missions as a team—no one plays alone. This is as close to real urban fighting as you can get without joining the U.S. Army Infantry on which the game is based.





## TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 3

Developer and publisher Ubisoft ■ PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, GameCube, PC ■ Available Fall 2005



If you could foresee what it'd be like to be a soldier in the U.S. Army 10 years from now, you'd probably see images closely resembling Ghost Recon 3 for the Xbox 360. Based on current U.S. Army research for improving soldier effectiveness on the battlefield, Ghost Recon 3's gameplay centers on the Integrated Warfighter System (IWS). This system enables a soldier to have full situational awareness and command of the battlefield by continually having an uplink with satellite communication technology. As a team leader, you'll be able to collect intel from other forces and unmanned drones, and direct artillery and air strikes at any location anytime.



## SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS

Developer: Zipper Interactive ■ Publisher: Sony ■ PS2 ■ Available Fall 2005



With SOCOM 3, the developers are committed to making the single-player campaign as fun and engaging as the multiplayer mode. The biggest addition is probably the new vehicle-based combat. While one player drives, his teammates can blast away using mounted cannons. Stealth is still the preferred course of action, and players can now swim underwater to evade (or stalk) enemies. As for controls, SOCOM 3's retweaked analog aiming feels smooth and fluid. But the biggest, greatest addition has got to be the amazing new weapon-customization mode, which lets you swap out multiple modifications, such as heavy suppressors, laser sights, and pistol grips. All in all, SOCOM 3 is looking like a real ace on the line. Fall can't come soon enough!



## \*War\* Heroes

### SOCOM SERIES

This series is created with the cooperation and assistance of the U.S. Navy SEALs and was the first to showcase this hard-core, elite military unit. It stands out as Sony's best PS2 shooter. Innovations it introduced include squad-based tactics and interactive use of a headset in both single-player and multiplayer missions.







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XBOX TV

TEA+RE

# THE XBOX 360 COMES AROUND

Microsoft's made the first move into the next generation of console video gaming, and with the Xbox 360, it slams down a formidable gauntlet that has power and style.

**T**he Xbox 360 is a lot like the three-ring binder you find in your office. Often all business, the Xbox 360 is Microsoft's take on the circular thing you think about things that are fun. It's got basketballs, steering wheels, DVDs, and pepperoni pizza come to mind...what-ever, as long as the system makes games its center of attention.

## Going with the Flow

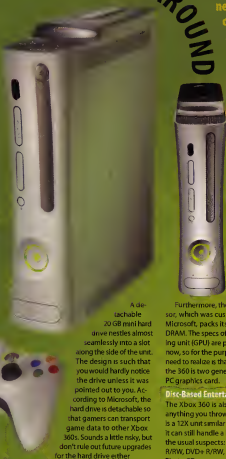
One thing's certain: There was nothing circular about the thinking behind the 360's design. At first glance, its appearance is as much of a shocker as the Xbox's was when it was unveiled in 2001. The original looked like a PC crammed in to a box. It was heavy metal...American steel...juiced muscle. It was humongous, dark, and almost ominous looking, and it dwarfed its more stylish Japanese counterparts, the PlayStation 2 and GameCube.

The Xbox 360 sets that original design on its ear. The new 'box literally represents a communion of cultures. Industrial design firms located at opposite ends of the Pacific sculpted it: Astro from San Francisco and Hers, based in Osaka, Japan, were actually competitors, each bidding for the new Xbox contract. The two companies discovered that they had complementary visions for the new game system's design.

This Microsoft console definitely exudes something the original never had—style! The distinctly East-meets-West design veers dramatically away from its predecessor and couldn't look more different than the original black box. The body is noticeably concave and easily stackable. At 83 mm (W) by 258 mm (H) by 309 mm (L), the 360 is slimmer than the Xbox with a more compact overall footprint. And if you were betting that the Asian flair has something to do with the Black Box's retail struggles in Japan, the odds would be in your favor. The body color is light cream (not unlike that of the Dreamcast) with cool chrome accents, such as the facing edge of the DVD tray. The façade is neat and spare, and in the future, you'll be able to add custom faceplates.

## On the Outside

The console features two memory-card slots set in the face (like the PS2 and GameCube), and there are no controller ports because the 360 will support four wireless RF controllers. Also mounted in the front will be two USB ports. Among other potential input possibilities, these can be used to connect cables to the controllers if you prefer the security of playing that way.



Get behind the console. A detachable hard drive nestles into a slot along the side of the unit.

A detachable 20 GB mini hard drive nestles almost seamlessly into a slot along the side of the unit. The design is such that you would hardly notice the drive unless it was pointed out to you. According to Microsoft, the hard drive is detachable so that gamers can transport game data to other Xbox 360s. Sounds a little risky, but don't rule out future upgrades for the hard drive either.

## The Next Box

Of course, the 360 has more than good looks going for it. This system is ready to burn!

The hardware is impressive and packed with more power than that in any other console ever. Compared to the Xbox's Intel Pentium III running at 733 MHz, the 360's custom IBM PowerPC-based CPU has three symmetrical cores each running at 3.2 GHz—this is fast! And the 360 will haul data with a massive 512 MB of RAM, which makes the Xbox's once-meaty 64 MB seem downright emaciated by comparison.

Furthermore, the 500 MHz graphics processor, which was custom-designed by ATI and Microsoft, packs its own 10 MB of embedded DRAM. The specs of the 360's graphics processing unit (GPU) are pretty well documented by now, so for the purposes of this article, all you need to realize is that Microsoft is claiming that the 360 is two generations ahead of ATI's best PC graphics card.

## Disk-Based Entertainment

The Xbox 360 is also going to play just about anything you throw at it, too. Although its DVD is a 12X unit similar to that in the original Xbox, it can still handle a bunch of formats, including the usual suspects: DVD-video, DVD-ROM, DVD-R/RW, DVD+R/RW, CD-ROM, MP3 CD, and JPEG Photo CD.

Also, if you use the Xbox for a DVD movie player, you'll like the fact that the 360 doesn't require a remote control accessory for movie playback. Moreover, it has a built-in progressive scan as well as HD game support (like that in the previous Xbox).

## Xbox Fall Circle

Microsoft has done its homework, and now the company is going for it. The Xbox 360 is a mesmerizing piece of technology that feels like fun even before you fire it up. As the fall launch approaches, no doubt more about the system will be revealed. Looks like the Xbox is here to play.



The front of the system is lean and clean.

## A 360 Roundup

Here are some next-generation titles that are headed to the Xbox 360.



**The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**  
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks



**NBA Live 2006**  
Publisher: EA Sports



**Need for Speed: Most Wanted**  
Publisher: EA Games



**Ninety-Nine Nights**  
Publisher: Microsoft



**Kingdoms of Amalur**  
Publisher: Microsoft



**Quake 4**  
Publisher: Activision



**Tiger Woods PGA Tour**  
Publisher: EA Sports

The Xbox 360 controller is the same size as the current Controller S and features a similar button and analog stick layout. However, there are a few new features (called "bumpers") designed to replace the functionality of the original "X" and "Y" buttons. The new four-way analog stick of the green 360 is also functional, too, as an LED that indicates which numbered player you are in multiplayer matches.



### Also in Development:

*Amped 3* • 2K Sports • Skateboarding  
*Call of Duty 2* • Activision • Men/combat  
*Condensed* • Sega • Memoir  
*The Darkness* • Atari • Action/adventure  
*Full Auto* • Sega • Action/combat  
*Medien NFL 2007* • EA Sports • Football  
*Model of War* • European Assault • EA Games • Men/combat  
*NBA 2K6* • 2K Sports • Basketball  
*NHL 2K6* • 2K Sports • Hockey  
*Stronghold* • Midway • Action/adventure  
*Test Drive Unlimited* • Atari • Racing  
*Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 3* • Ubisoft • Command/combat  
*Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* • Activision • Skateboarding  
*Top Spin* • 2K Sports • Tennis

	Xbox	Xbox 360
<b>CPU</b>	Intel T2300 dual-core 3.0GHz Broadway thread	Custom-designed Intel PowerPC-based CPU with three operational cores running at 3.2GHz each. The hardware thread per core and on-chip cache threads total
<b>Graphics Processor</b>	ATI Radeon X360 custom-designed chip developed by Microsoft and ATI	ATI Radeon X360 custom-designed chip developed by Microsoft and ATI
<b>Total Memory</b>	64MB	512 MB
<b>Built-in Hard Drive</b>	Yes	Detachable, up to 160GB hard disk
<b>VR</b>	Four game controllers - DirectInput (Xbox 360)	Four wireless game controllers - Xbox 360 2.0 ports - Two wireless controllers
<b>Audio Channels</b>	22K	More than 256
<b>3D Audio Support to Hardware</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Audio™ Display 3.1 Surround Sound</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Parental Control</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Removable Hard Drive</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>3D Movie Playback</b>	Removable hard drive required	Yes, built-in progressive scan
<b>NET Game Support</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Maximum Resolution</b>	1080i 60Hz	1080p 60Hz
<b>E.S. Launch Date</b>	November 2005	Full 2005

# DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

BRADYGAMES SHOWS YOU HOW TO BECOME  
AN EFFECTIVE HUMAN-BUSTING ALIEN.

## GETTING STARTED

**Psychokinetic Telemetry:** During your time on Earth, you'll be receiving Psychokinetic Data from the Mothership via telemetry. The data will appear on the Area Map in the lower-right corner of the screen and/or as virtual indicators floating over noteworthy creatures or objects in your vicinity.

**Cortex Scan:** Performing a Cortex Scan will let Crypto read the thoughts of any unsuspecting creature. To implement a Cortex Scan, press and hold the Probe button—If done correctly, the Cortex Scan option will appear on the Ability Menu in the left corner of the screen. While holding down the Probe button, press the Cortex Scan button. You can scan a creature's mind until its thoughts have been ripped from its puny little brain as long as you keep the Cortex Scan button held down.

**Psychokinesis:** Furons can do more with their massive cerebrum than just scanning lesser minds. The art of Psychokinesis (PK) enables you to elevate and move objects that are many times your own weight. While holding down the Probe button, tap the PK button to lift the object into the air. You can use the right analog stick to move it around as well as slam it into the ground. Once the object has been PK'd up into the air, you can also PK Push it by tapping the PK button as well as reel the object in and out.

**Zap-O-Matic:** While the Zap-O-Matic may not be the mightiest weapon in a Furon's arsenal, a few prolonged blasts from it will fry

any human being into a quivering, burnt mass of skin and bones. Firing the Zap-O-Matic drains its batteries, requiring you to wait for them to recharge before you can fire again.

**Brain Extraction:** This is what your mission is all about—extracting Furon DNA from the humans' Brain Stems. When you kill a human, target its corpse and hold down the Probe button.

**Shield:** Your Shield protects you from damage, although it will deplete with repeated attacks. The Shield Energy Bar can be found at the top-right corner of the screen, and evading combat for a short period of time will allow it to recharge. If the Shield is completely depleted, you'll be vulnerable—further injuries result in a quick trip to the Mothership's cloning chambers, where a cloned version of yourself will be produced and sent back to Earth.

**Death Ray:** While the Death Ray has unlimited energy, firing it for long periods of time will cause it to overheat, requiring you to let it cool down in between shots.

**Hypno Blast:** Performing a Hypno Blast will enable Crypto to control the minds of these pathetic human beings. Once the Hypno Blast has successfully been executed, you'll then be able to implant limited commands inside their puny brains, which include "Sleep" and "Distraction." In addition, there may be times when you'll be able to issue context-specific commands that are tied to a certain scenario or mission objective.

**Jet Packs:** The Earth's atmosphere plays havoc with the Furon Jet Pack technology. While you can still use it, you'll have limited thrust and lift before it sputters out and drops you back to terra firma.

**Holobob:** You can use your Holobob ability to disguise yourself as one of those disgusting humans—how can you stand it? When disguised, people will think you are one of them and will not become aware of your true form. Unfortunately, this technology has not been perfected, so your disguise will work as long as you don't get too close to the local authorities. Be aware that your Concentration Meter will deplete over time while in this mode, and you'll revert back to your alien form when it has been completely exhausted.

**Hey, Whatcha Thinkin'?:** Virtual indicators appear over certain objects, creatures, and human beings as thought bubbles. Learn to read them as they can help you gauge the object's current state, which can include surprise, curiosity, and even hostility.

**Need To Concentrate:** Using your mental abilities drains Concentration. When your Concentration Meter has been completely drained, you won't be able to use your powers until it's been refilled. Concentration blips are recharged by scanning humans, and they also slowly recharge over time.

**What's That Smell?:** A few things of note about Brain Extraction and DNA. Brain stems will degrade over time and eventually disappear, so grab them as quickly as possible.

They also replenish your health—a nice added benefit. You can use the DNA you've collected to trade for some nice upgrades at the Mothership, and you must collect DNA to unlock missions.

**Ring Around the Rosy:** A good way to keep yourself from taking too much damage is to strafe around your target, dodging it while zapping it with the Zap-O-Matic—a moving target is much tougher to hit than a stationary one. Make sure you extract the Brain Stems after killing each one as you may not get a second chance later.

**It's Good To Be Sneaky:** You can use stealth to sneak up on your unsuspecting human prey. Do your best to stay out of their sight range by keeping an eye on the virtual indicators over their heads. A question mark means they have seen something, but they're not sure what; one exclamation mark means they definitely saw something and will investigate; and two exclamation marks mean you've been spotted.

**Crunchy On The Outside:** Your saucer's hull can take only so much damage before it is destroyed, taking you along with it. The only way to repair its hull is to find a Repair Pod, which Fox will drop for you when certain buildings have been destroyed.

## MISSION 1



Before you embark on your mission to invade Earth, you need to come to grips with your many extraterrestrial powers. To start this mission, head over to the cow paddock directly in front of you, jump over the fence, and then approach the highlighted cow.



Scan the first cow you come to—its thoughts are primitive yet profound. Select a second cow and scan it as well.



Once two cows have been scanned, Crypto will have a brief verbal exchange with one of the herd. Unfortunately for him, it doesn't go as planned—he is quite literally ends up getting dumped on. Show them whose boss by performing Psychokinesis.



Use PK on the first cow you see and either slam it into the ground or use PK Push to hurl it skyward. Orthopox (or Pox, for short) wants you to PK a total of six cows—that should teach them.



Quickly approach the farmer and fry him up! Keep the Fire button pressed until all of the juice has been drained from the Zap-O-Matic. One prolonged blast should drop him to his knees—permanently.



Once the farmer has been eliminated, you can grab a souvenir in the form of his Brain Stem! Target him and extract that brain.



As soon as you extract the brain, the farmer's wife comes out of the house and screams with horror at the sight of your form. Her screams alert the neighbors. It's a good thing you're equipped with a Shield.



You have to zap a total of three farmhands, which shouldn't be too difficult. However, they are carrying shotguns, so be careful and keep moving. Use the Area Map to locate each farmhand and then give him the shake and bake.



As soon as all three farmhands have been eliminated, the local authorities appear and find your spacecraft—that's no good. Continue your killing spree by taking them out.



Once the threat has been quelled, you'll be called back to your saucer. Make sure you extract the Brain Stems from the carillon you've left behind and then position yourself underneath the saucer and beam yourself inside. The saucer's location is marked by a blue dot on the Area Map.



It's time to clean up your mess and show the locals you mean business. Your saucer is built with the latest in Furion state-of-the-art technology and comes standard equipped with a menacing and deadly Death Ray. Why not lay waste to the landscape and surrounding structures?



The very moment you drop the final structure to the ground, the human military industrial complex shows up. If their leaders find out about your presence, your mission is cooked for sure. Turn your Death Ray on them.



You'll have to contend with ground units and tanks firing at your saucer. At the moment, there are two cargo trucks and a tank that need to be eliminated. Stay moving to avoid the tank's mortar fire and take it out first, then turn your attention to the rest.



As soon as the first set of vehicles and troops has been destroyed, a new wave will appear to the north through the bushes. Locate and take them out, then find and eliminate the last set, which are making a final push.

CONTINUED ►



## MISSION 2



Your first mission objective is to enter the fairgrounds, which can be found directly to the north. It's not going to be a cakewalk, though, as you'll find that many of these pesky humans have congregated outside the grounds. Luckily, you can use another one of your powers to aid you in your mission—Hypno Blast.



There are many ways to get into the fair undetected. One way is to use your Jet Pack to hover over the left wall. Take down the farmer patrolling the perimeter by putting him to sleep and then use the Jet Pack to lift your compact body over the wall and into the fair.



A second way to get into the fair undetected is to use your Holobob ability. Doing so disguises yourself as a human and lets you stroll unnoticed through the front gate.



Start scanning, making sure you read the minds of everyone you can find. Do so in a counterclockwise fashion, making sure you cover every inch of the fair.



Once you've scanned enough minds and have found and scanned at least two humans with virtual indicators over their heads, Pox will contact you with a new mission objective—

to find Miss Rockwell, hypnotize her, and then bring her back to the saucer for collection.



You'll find Miss Rockwell practicing her walk down the red carpet inside the big tent. Make sure your Concentration Meter is filled and then head inside. Next, use your Hypno Blast on her and then command her to "Walk to Saucer."



As soon as she has been Hypno Blasted and ordered to the saucer, make sure you follow her scanning minds as needed to keep your Holobob disguise going.



Miss Rockwell running from the fair will raise the awareness of the local law enforcement and possibly alert them to your presence. Do your best to steer clear of them until you can get her up to the ship.



Approach the saucer, and Miss Rockwell will voluntarily walk into its beams. As she is sucked up into the ship, she'll get the ride of her life. Vocal, responsive—just the way you like it!



Now that you have your test subject, it's time to get inside the saucer yourself. It's possible that the authorities are on to you, so you may have to contend with a few of them before you can beam up yourself. Make sure you grab their Brain Stems before leaving.



When the coast is clear, beam up yourself into the saucer and then use its massive firepower on the fair. You don't want anyone reporting that there was a little green—or gray man skulking about its grounds, now do you?



It looks as though the police and the military are on to you. Concentrate on eliminating their forces around the perimeter of the fair grounds before attempting to tackle the fair itself.

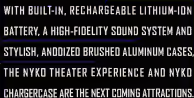


Taking out the big tent completes your final mission goal, enabling you to return to the Mothership for your next mission. Pox will want to give you the results of the probing of Miss Rockwell... plus, he's hoping you brought him back some cotton candy.

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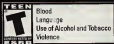
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PlayStation 2





## Prince Of Persia 3

**K**nowing that there's never too much of a good thing, Ubisoft is preparing another sequel in the Prince of Persia franchise, and this time our hero isn't just fighting hordes of mythical enemies and solving puzzles; he's also fighting for his very identity.

### Know Thy Self

With this latest installment, you're given the choice of playing not only as the Prince but also as another, as-of-yet unrevealed character, both

of which will have unique styles of combat. The fighting system you're accustomed to will return, no doubt with plenty of new acrobatically challenging moves, and in an attempt to feed off the success of another Ubisoft series (Splinter Cell), you will now be able to practice in the stealth arts, executing silent but brutal assassinations on enemies. To add even further variety to combat, a new weapon called the Daggertail will be introduced, allowing for long-range strangulation of enemies. Of course, the Sands of Time will make a return appearance, letting you slow or stop time along with some new, more surprising uses.

### This Isn't Your Father's Babylon

This next Prince of Persia looks to retain the darker mood and setting of its predecessor with much of the action taking place in the

ruined city of Babylon, the Prince's once peaceful and prosperous homeland. The Prince is cast as a fugitive and an enemy of the state during his quest to discover the reasons behind his city's downfall, all the while he must battle the spirit of a Dark Prince who is gradually possessing him. Dark alleyways; winding, chaotic streets; perilous rooftops;

and mysterious underground passages—says the Prince's battlefield this time around, and as these screens can attest, most of the areas will be drenched in shadow, offering prime positions to commit those previously mentioned stealth kills.

With the Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time having received intense critical acclaim and the sequel, Warrior Within, selling even better than the first, Ubisoft knows there's plenty of potential left in the franchise. And as long as the developer's promise to spare us the tedium of generic heavy metal niffs that marred Warrior Within, we can all look forward to even more acrobatic hack-n-slash platforming when the game is released this fall.—The Watcher

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Ubisoft Montreal  
■ Publisher: Ubisoft ■ Target release date: Fall 2005







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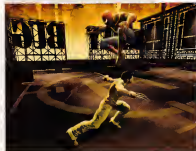
Sweet Tooth and company are back, so take cover and get behind the wheel of one of 14 fully armed vehicles. Upgrade your weapons, battle across deadly arenas, discover bonus levels and go head to head with wireless connectivity for up to 8 players. With Twisted Metal: Head On™ a path of destruction follows you wherever you go.



# Burnout Revenge

**B**urnout fans are likely to break into spontaneous drool mode at the announcement of this fourth installment in the prized, damn-this-game-is-fast racing franchise. For the uninitiated, Burnout gained notoriety for its Crash mode, where the objective was to steer your car into busy traffic, crash, and try to cause the biggest pileup possible. Burnout Revenge takes players around the globe—from Detroit to Tokyo—in four modes, including Road Rage, Crash, and New Race. One of the notable new modes is Revenge, which pits you against the crash and rush-hour traffic. Other details on the game are fleeting, but fans can rest assured that there will be no shortage of shattering glass, twisted metal, and other flying debris, or lack of a sense of overwhelming speed in Burnout Revenge. —Major Mike

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Criterion Studios  
 ■ Publisher: EA Games ■ Target release date: September



# Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects

**T**he Marvel superheroes have been busy lately. Appearing mostly as solo action/adventure icons, the gang hasn't had a chance to come together and use their powers to bruise each other—until now. EA is teaming up with comic artist-legend Jae Lee (*Uncanny X-Men* and *Captain America*) and Hollywood talent Paul Catling (character designer for the *Spider-Man* and *The Punisher* films) to create the ultimate Marvel brawler, which will also coincide with Marvel's new six-issue comic of the same name.

In *Rise of the Imperfects*, you can play as any of a dozen-plus mutants, including Spider-Man, Wolverine, and Iron Man. The game also features a new cast of playable characters (The Imperfects), all of whom will be unveiled in the actual comic book, which will be on newsstands from May through October. Destructible arenas based on Marvel universe environments as well as landmarks in New York City are your playground, and if you grow tired of using your powers, you can also hurl items like cars and lamp posts to gut-check opponents. —Four-Eyed Dragon

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Nihilistic Software ■ Publisher: EA Games ■ Target release date: October



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## PREVIEWS

# Killer 7

FX  
GameCube

A word of warning: Nothing can prepare you for the bizarreness of *Killer 7*. It is a game that largely defies description save that it is perhaps one of the most original but also weirdest games made in a very long time.

Originally a GameCube exclusive that is now also appearing on the PS2, *Killer 7* is a postmodern approach toward Resident Evil with you filling the shoes of a schizophrenic assassin with multiple personalities. Responsible for removing the threat of "Heaven's Smile"—violent zombie-esque creatures who make unusually upbeat grunts and groans, and explode into tiny particles of what is presumably blood—you must use all of your distinct alter egos to eventually reach the criminal mastermind who released these creatures and take him down.

It sounds about as realistic as any other video game, right? That's just the tip of the iceberg. The first deviation from

normality comes from the graphics, a blend of cel-shaded cartoon and postmodern art. Locations are stylishly bare and all done in bold, hypnotic colors, while characters run the gamut from extremely caricatured to grittily realistic. The effect is a game that at once looks immensely original in artistic direction but difficult to completely absorb. The dialogue makes the game only more peculiar with much of it comprised of stiff robotic-speaking characters that appear to be conversing in tongues.

But it doesn't end there. Control of your characters isn't achieved in the usual style. Instead, you direct them through a creative and simple menu system, essentially moving on rails. All said, the game leaves an impression that's typical of postmodern displays: fascination with its creativity but also complete incomprehension. For those looking for a unique and challenging experience, be ready to think outside the box when *Killer 7* comes out in June. —*The Watcher*

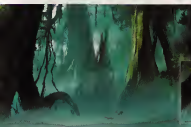
■ **Hands-On** ■ Developer and publisher: Capcom  
■ **Target release date:** June



# Peter Jackson's King Kong

Don't mistake this as another dinosaur hunter (a.k.a. Turok). Sure, dinosaurs along with other murderous creatures are a big draw on Skull Island, but there's something much bigger to see. A gigantic, hulking behemoth roams the land and has a fetish for young, blond women. His name: King Kong, and Ubisoft has partnered with star director Peter Jackson to develop a game based on Jackson's upcoming Kong movie. The game will have you play from two perspectives: first-person while in the expedition group and third-person as you beat the snot out of annoying monsters using King Kong. You'll continuously jump from one perspective to the other, which ties in key moments of the entire film. Hmm...a game based on a movie...sounds sketchy, but with Peter Jackson giving lots of input into the game, this may be more than simple monkey business.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

■ **First Look** ■ **Developer and publisher:** Ubisoft ■ **Target release date:** December



Ubisoft is taking extra care to re-create the movie's imagery for the game. (Left) game screen; (right) actual movie frame.



# Ultimate Spider-Man

It only makes sense for Activision to continue to build on its Spider-Man success. But without another Spider-Man movie on which to base a game, the next most obvious source is Spidey's origin—the comics. Based on the comic of the same name, Ultimate Spider-Man will heavily involve Peter Parker's more menacing arch nemesis, Venom, in a brand-new story line. Besides a new comic-book look, Ultimate Spider-Man will feature a new combat system that enables Spidey to battle what Activision claims to be "the largest number of villains from the Spider-Man universe ever assembled in one game." Rockin'! The web of action has officially begun.—*Four-Eyed Dragon*

■ **First Look** ■ **Developer:** Treyarch ■ **Publisher:** Activision ■ **Target release date:** Fall 2005



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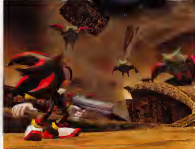
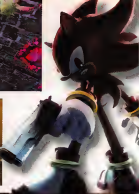
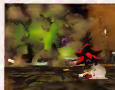
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# Shadow the Hedgehog

Look out! Here comes the hedgehog, armed and dangerous. That's right, Sega is taking the beloved franchise in a "new direction" by starring Sonic's nemesis Shadow in his own adventure but with a twist—now he can shoot while he zooms around. The action is as quick, light, and smooth as that in any of Sonic's 3D titles, and you sell collect rings, slide, roll, and jump. The game features a variety of guns, which Shadow can equip one at a time, but the demo also showcased a big, glowing sword. Edgy, isn't it?

The fate of Shadow is for the player to guide: A morality meter tracks his tendencies toward good or evil, activating a supermove if the meter fills up all the way in either direction. Killing presumably bad aliens nets you "hero" points, while gunning down soldiers will score you "chaos" points. Problem is, when we played the early build, you had to eliminate both factions to get through the levels because both soldiers and aliens shoot at you on sight anyway. So, the dichotomy seems arbitrary and, well, pointless. Still, it's early yet, and maybe these vagaries will be ironed out to make more sense by the game's release date. Overall, though, we have to ask: Is this the flagship game to revive Sega? We can't help but be just a bit skeptical. —GameGirl

■ **Hands-On** ■ Developer and publisher: Sega  
■ Target release date: Winter 2005



# Aeon Flux

Artist Peter Chung's sexy, exotic, convoluted obsession *Aeon Flux* aired as an instant phenomenon on MTV when the channel was still a breeding ground for innovation in music and television. The show was a gloriously twisted take on sci-fi, starring an enigmatic, extremely shaped heroine with crazy hair whose role in a vast conspiracy remained an utter mystery. Take this dense legacy of entwined art and plots, strip away all style and personality, and you'll end up with Majesco's diluted video game that's based on the movie that's based on the show. Charlize Theron (she's *Aeon Flux* in the movie) has name recognition, sure, but can she really pull off a character as harshly beautiful and eerily athletic as the original heroine? Maybe the mainstream thought Peter Chung's vision was just too weird.

We haven't seen a lot of the game yet—a handful of screen shots that are, yes, competent but utterly without verve or imagination. At first glance, the game looks disappointingly generic. It's missing that eccentric flair that characterized the cartoon series. The character modeled on the actress wears a bland black unitard, and her hair, though black, doesn't have the characteristic sharp wings. The environment also seems far too realistic—there's little sign of the bizarre trippy-futurist world we remember. Will *Aeon Flux* be another Catwoman, doomed to mediocrity with a pretty face? That would be a shame, indeed, and a sad fate for what was once a unique creation vibrating with almost creepy originality. We can only hope that the gameplay will ultimately redeem its uninspired art direction. —GameGirl

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Terminal Reality  
■ Publisher: Majesco ■ Target release date: October



PS2

Xbox



# Batman Begins

**P**oor Batman. Not only has he suffered from witnessing the murder of his parents and the downfall of his hometown into a haven for crime and villainy, but the caped crusader has also had to endure a slew of horrible and, at best, mediocre games over the years. Change is in the air, however, with the latest iteration of the Batman series, *Batman Begins*. The game follows the film of the same name closely, and you play the young Bruce Wayne as he evolves into the brutal and troubled dark hero that is Batman, all while settling in as the protector of Gotham City.

Much like the movie itself, there appears to be a concerted effort to make sure *Batman Begins* recaptures some of the luster he lost in previous engagements. No protruding nipples or codpieces will be found this time, and the story is noticeably darker. Batman is going back to his roots as a slyman of the shadows, using his cunning just as often as his fists. Fear plays a crucial part in the game; the more you frighten your enemies, the less effectively they'll fight—if at all. Playing off such fear, interrogation can be used to drain information from opponents, further revealing the story while also offering potential tactics in approaching difficult objectives.

Most noticeable, however, is the level of polish *Batman Begins* exudes—something no other game in the franchise has yet achieved. The graphics in the preview build were topnotch, the controls were relatively tight, and the inclusion of voice acting from the stars of the film helped greatly with immersion. If the game can

be further refined before its eventual release, *Batman* fans have a lot to look forward to. Let's just hope it follows its aptly named title and begins a renewal of the franchise.—*The Watcher*

- **Ready On** ■ Developer: Eidos
- Publisher: EA Games/Warner Bros. Interactive
- Target release date: June



# killer7

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## Ratchet: Deadlocked

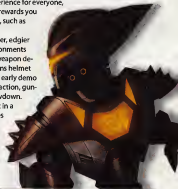
**T**his fourth installment, *Deadlocked*, of the popular *Ratchet & Clank* series finds our duo captured by Glee-man Vox, a deranged media mogul who uses Ratchet as a contestant in his reality combat show called *DreadZone*. The major innovations in this game are the introduction of co-op gameplay in both single-player and multiplayer story modes, and squad-based functionality for a brand-new, gun-blasting experience.

The action is fast and furious as Ratchet goes solo or with a buddy against unending waves of Vox's robotic henchmen. You can have Ratchet control two drones with a variety of commands, including taking out specific targets, covering your back, and acting as decoys. The detailed customization feature enables an almost limitless number of power-up combinations for your 10 weapon types as well as for your 'bots. Nonlinear gameplay offers a more unique experience for everyone, too. Plus, the new mission structure rewards you with a constant progression of items, such as weapons, armor, and health.

Ratchet and his world have a darker, edgier feel now with more believable environments and aggressive-looking vehicle and weapon designs. Ratchet himself is only seen sans helmet and armor in the FMV cut-scenes. An early demo revealed an abundance of onscreen action, gunfire, and incoming flak with zero slowdown.

It was especially cool to pilot Ratchet in a couple of the badass-looking vehicles as you rained down destruction upon your enemies. *Ratchet: Deadlocked* seems locked on to being a quality game this fall. —Dr. Zombie

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Insomniac Games  
 ■ Publisher: Sony ■ Target release date: Fall 2005



## Jak X: Combat Racing

**H**ow can there be another Jak and Daxter game if Jak 3 was the "end" of the trilogy? That's because *Jak X: Combat Racing* takes the same characters and thrusts them into a combat racing game, which presents a completely different gaming experience than that of past adventures.

After Jak stopped the menacing Dark Maker in Jak 3, combat racing emerged as the premiere sport for entertainment in Kras City. Jak discovers that he's been poisoned by the now-deceased archenemy Krew and must win the racing championship in order to get the antidote. Fans of Daxter will be disappointed to see that he's been relegated to a nonactive role this time—

guess there's only room for one in that cockpit.

You can play solo, split-screen, or go online with up to six players. The game features a vast assortment of missions and race modes, plus bonus tasks on 20 tracks, eight combat arenas, and large, open terrains to just cruise to your heart's content. Over 100 events are included in the solo Adventure mode alone.

A slick frame rate in an early build created a believable sense of speed, and the cars could be customized with hundreds of variables to ensure a unique racing experience every time. Especially fun were the online death matches and beast hunts, where everyone raced to tag giant dinosaurs while avoiding collisions with each other. There will also be an unlockable feature between Jak X and the Jak PSP game, which will be released later this year.

—Dr. Zombie

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Naughty Dog ■ Publisher: Sony ■ Target release date: Fall 2005



# Far Cry Instincts

Arriving as an unexpected smash hit that delivered breathtaking visuals before big-name blockbusters *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* hit the shelves, *Far Cry* for the PC is proving itself to be a long-standing franchise. Now, Ubisoft intends to spread that success to the Xbox with *Far Cry Instincts*.

In the PC first-person shooter, you fill the shoes of Jack Carver, hired to escort a photojournalist through a string of tropical islands only to have your boat sunk. Next thing you know, you're on the run from a gang of social rejects ranging from pirates and mercenaries to even more unsavory creatures. The paper-thin story, however, wasn't what garnered accolades. The expansiveness and open-endedness of the jungle islands, along with jaw-dropping graphics, impressive physics, and strong A.I., were what truly fueled the game's popularity. All of these features are promised for the Xbox version.

Still, *Far Cry Instincts* won't be just a straight port of the original as Ubisoft is making sure it has plenty to offer Xbox FPS fans. New features, such as the ability to improve your vision, track the scent of your enemies, and build up strength and speed, are all being added. Multiplayer mode will receive a facelift as well, including a map editor to enable you to easily build custom maps that can then be loaded onto Xbox Live so

you can play with friends. Building upon an already solid game and adding notable improvements in both single- and multiplayer modes, Ubisoft looks to offer Xbox gamers significant incentive to follow their instincts this summer. —*The Watcher*

■ **First look** ■ Developer: Ubisoft Montreal  
■ Publisher: Ubisoft ■ Target release date: September



# Killer7



[www.killer7.com](http://www.killer7.com)

# Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves

Picking up shortly after the end of *Sly 2*, *Sly 3* has the rowdy raccoonious and crew battling against rival gangs of thieves who are after the Cooper family fortune. A vast assortment of new features plus the addition of multiplayer gameplay (finally!) make this a promising new adventure.

The new underlining feature in the game is the ability to play head-to-head and cooperative multiplayer missions in split-screen mode. In addition to playing as Sly, Murray, and Bentley, you can now play as Inspector Carmelita Fox, Lounge Lizard Dimitri, and others. In addition to his super-slick moves, Sly is now a master of disguise, enabling him to move in the open without being noticed. The disguises not only affect his look but also his personality and

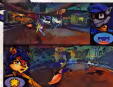
moves. An abundance of new mini-games ensures added replay value with biplane battles, opera singing, and even a drinking contest. A time machine feature lets you replay mini-games and missions using new moves, abilities, and disguises to score even higher points.

It wasn't conceivable that *Sly*'s trademark graphics could be even more impressive, but they are in *Sly 3*. New open environments such as Venice, China, and The Outback, plus characters including a quirky, shaman koala bear, show off the graphic artists' ability to flex their pens and gun the PS2's graphics engine even more. The capper in a demo was the sight of a 50-foot Inspector Carmelita Fox with Sly Cooper scaling her leg as she trampled through town. That's going to be worth the price of admission alone.

—Dr. Zombie

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Sucker Punch

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Target release date: Fall 2005



# The Suffering: Ties That Bind

For Torque: After escaping the terrors of the prison in the first game, he finds himself in an almost-equally horrifying setting for the sequel: the city of Baltimore. Seeking revenge on Caleb Blackmore, Torque must survive the tough city streets that are filled with monsters and other threats, including assaults on his sanity. As a sequel to last year's sleeper hit, *Ties That Bind* retains the flashbacks and warped reality of the original but with a new sense of purpose as it vividly depicts a variety of urban injustices—such as poverty, riots, and street crimes. Torque is once again armed to the hilt with an awesome variety of firepower, including machine-guns, pistols, and explosives. And when things get too intense, he can transform into one of three powerful demons. The game also offers nonlinear gameplay in the form of moral choices that ultimately affect the outcome, and you can use saved data from the first *Suffering* to steer you in a certain direction with *Ties*. Not for the faint of heart, this second *Suffering* features lots of violence, gore, and profanity. —Major Mike

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Sammel Software ■ Publisher: Midway ■ Target release date: Fall 2005



## L.A. Rush

One of the crown jewels in Midway's arcade archive is L.A. Rush, an intense arcade racer where making obscene jumps across skyscrapers wasn't an uncommon event. Similar to Area-51, Rush is getting tuned up for the new millennium with open-ended gameplay and the option to pimp your ride. But don't say "Underground," yet: Rush will still feature the obscene jumps, shortcuts, and outlandish physics that made its arcade forefather a hit. To add authenticity, Midway has teamed up with West Coast Customs and *Rides Magazine* to create more than 50 custom cars in addition to the licensed rides from Chevrolet, Mitsubishi, Cadillac, and others. Additionally, races will take place in five recreated Los Angeles locales based on Hollywood, Santa Monica, and others. L.A. Rush will boast the first racing "Story Mode," where you must take back 30 of your cars by finding clues and stealing or trashing your enemies' top cars. —Major Mike

- **First Look**
- **Developer:** Midway San Diego
- **Publisher:** Midway
- **Target release date:** Fall 2005



## Colosseum: Road to Freedom

That the corruption and decadence of Imperial Rome did not inspire more revolts is a testament to the staggering bureaucratic control the city exerted over its citizens and slaves. You can experience the brutality of a controlling empire through one man's life in the action/RPG *Colosseum: Road to Freedom*. As a gladiator from a conquered territory,

you progress in the ranks by training, collecting weapons, and engaging in deathmatches. The fighting is detailed but never too difficult with a number of complex moves that build effective tactics in battle royales. The visual aesthetic obviously owes a lot to Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* with stark lighting and gritty characterizations. The premise is promising: earn enough money to buy your freedom against the backdrop of the unraveling of one of the greatest cities in history. —GameGirl

- **First Look**
- **Developer:** Goliath
- **Publisher:** Koei
- **Target release date:** July



# Killer7



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# Katamari Damacy 2

The pint-sized heir apparent is back to resume his appointed task of reclaiming the stars in this sequel to one of the kookiest Japanese games to be recently exported to the States, *Katamari Damacy*. The original premise of *Katamari Damacy* revolved around the King of All Cosmos who accidentally knocked all the stars out of the sky. The King tasked his young heir, the Prince, to collect junk from Earth with a special gravity ball to create new stars—wild Japanese psychedelic gameplay ensued.

In *Katamari Damacy 2*, it turns out that by the end of the first game, the Prince had only restored the stars to the sky immediately surrounding the Earth, and the Prince is sent back to Earth to create an even larger ball of junk to restore the stars in the entire solar system.

*Katamari Damacy 2*'s gameplay will essentially remain the same but will sport a few new features, such as several new playable cousin characters and a variety of new objectives and stage locations, including the Eiffel Tower, a zoo, and an underwater sea world. Additionally, the game will offer an expanded versus mode with a larger gameplay area and an all-new two-player co-op mode.

While the extra modes and gameplay additions will be welcomed by fans, the seemingly lack of any gameplay innovations and an uninspired plot might relegate this game to an expansion title. Still, restoring more stars might just be enough gravity to pull you in for a round of play. —*Rice Burner*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer and publisher: Namco  
■ Target release date: Summer 2005



# Spartan: Total Warrior

The Total War PC universe makes its console debut as an action/strategy spinoff in *Spartan: Total Warrior*. Contrary to the established Total War RTS franchise, *Spartan* enables players to assume the role of a single Spartan champion who is blessed by the Greek gods with unimaginable physical and magical abilities, and is entrusted with the complete annihilation of the Roman Empire.

*Spartan* has a distinctively *Dynasty Warriors*-feel as players are thrust into epic battles in massive environments, such as full-scale cities and arid wastelands that are populated with hundreds of warriors, including Roman centurions, skeleton armies, and hordes of mythical monsters pulled straight out of Greek mythology. Additionally, the game features a diverse and intricate battle system, which lets players use multiple melee and missile attacks, combos, shield charges, and evasive stances.

While *Spartan* is definitely infused with oodles of hack-n-slash action, the game also features a healthy dose of traditional strategy elements. Players gain the ability to evolve their champion from a lowly warrior to a legendary hero, acquire more power-



ful armor and weapons by accumulating favor from the gods, choose multiple paths to Rome, and take on side quests to recruit allied factions into their army to build a more formidable force.

With the capacity to handle 160 warriors onscreen, varying missions, multiple objectives, and a diverse combat system, *Spartan: Total Warrior* might be the most anticipated multiconsole hack-n-slash action game this year.

—*Rice Burner*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Creative Assembly  
■ Publisher: Sega ■ Target release date: Fall 2005



## Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows

**G**auntlet is an arcade legend, but lately, the series has been mired in mediocrity—just witness the silliness that was Gauntlet: Dark Legacy. But Midway still has high hopes for the venerable series, and it has drafted veteran designers John Romero (Doom) and Josh Sawyer (Icewind Dale) to help guide the effort. Their job won't be easy—the original games are timeless classics—but judging by the suitably dark story line, Seven Sorrows looks like it's on the right path. Newly freed from captivity, the heroes from the original Gauntlet games must confront their tormentor, an insane emperor who is wracked by guilt over his own past misdeeds (the titular "Seven Sorrows").

Major selling points for Seven Sorrows include a four-player co-op mode as well as an online RPG component that will enable players to trade precious items online. So far, so good. Here's hoping Seven Sorrows can recapture that old Gauntlet magic. —*Deuce Magnum*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer and publisher: Midway ■ Target release date: Winter 2005



## Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection



**H**appy Birthday, Namco! In celebration of its 50 whopping years of gaming existence, Namco is releasing an arcade collection that will rival everyone else's retro compilation thus far. Each of the 14 classic Namco games will be delivered in its original form without, of course, the hassle of shoveling quarters into the system to play. Among the legendary games included are: Ms. Pac-Man, Galaxian, Dig Dug, Rolling Thunder, Dragon Spirit, Spy Kid, Xevious, and Mappy. Despite their age, games this old still have a lot more longevity in them, and we fortunately still get to experience them! —*Four-Eyed Dragon*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Sackbone Entertainment  
■ Publisher: Namco ■ Target release date: August



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**PROTIP:** You should invest the bulk of your stat points in Body and Spirit. Don't invest too much in your Focus; it's more efficient to reduce your Focus consumption by upgrading your weapon styles instead.



## Jade Empire

You're looking at the first-ever kung-fu RPG. And though it might not quite score a flawless victory, Jade Empire puts up one hell of a good fight.



BioWare rocked the house with Baldur's Gate and scored a slam-dunk with Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic. Now it has unleashed Jade Empire, a hot new brawler with the heart of an old-school RPG. If you own an Xbox, you should own Jade Empire—it's as simple as that.

### Crouching Tiger, Hidden RPG

The game's developers drew equal inspiration from both ancient Chinese legend and chop-socky grindhouse flicks to forge Jade Empire's interesting post-modern take on Asian mythology. After selecting your character, you begin the game under the tutelage of a powerful instructor. The story line kicks into high gear after mysterious assassins kidnap your master and burn the village to the ground. Jade Empire's story is undeniably compelling, but it's the down-and-dirty RPG elements (stat building and subquests) that make the game shine brightest. Fans of Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic should feel right at home as Jade Empire enables players to choose between "The Way of the Open Palm" or "The Way of the Closed Fist," which place value on kindness and ruthlessness power, respectively. But it's a

shame that, for the most part, you can't customize your character's appearance in Jade Empire.

### "My Style Is Superior!"

Jade Empire's real-time combat scenarios are a major focus of the game, and while they're fun, they require patience and persistence. With the help of an A.I.-controlled follower, you kick, stomp, and slash huge throngs of enemies in scenarios that are seemingly plucked right out of Kill Bill. But before you grapple with your foes, you'll need to grapple with Jade Empire's somewhat convoluted controls, which make use of nearly every button on the Xbox's monolithic controller. With practice, the controls are generally tight and responsive, but it's hard to imagine that the game's developers couldn't have found a simpler control scheme. The biggest gameplay gripe, however, is undoubtedly the clunky combat camera. The camera views are so bad that sometimes they almost



**PROTIP:** If you're mobbed, simultaneously press Power Attack and Attack to buy some precious breathing room. Now you can dodge your way to a safer position.



**PROTIP:** Pick a philosophy and stick with it, in other words, either be a rotten bastard or a sweet-hearted savior. Don't try to walk the middle ground, or you'll miss out on many rewards.



**PROTIP:** Pick and choose your style upgrades carefully. You definitely need a strong unarmed technique (such as White Demon) to destroy ghosts as well as a potent weapon style for clashes with humans and demons. Upgrade those work-horse styles before all others.



**PROTIP:** Transformation styles, such as Teard Demon or Horse Demon, deal out massive damage, but they'll quickly drain your precious Chi meter, so save them for major battles.





**PROTIP:** Ducking is okay, but dodging is better—just tap B and the direction you wish to dodge. You can even briefly stun an opponent by dodging into him, giving you the perfect opening for a combo.

completely obscure the fight, leading you to wonder: If the camera itself is an enemy out to halt your quest.

In all fairness, the game neatly dodges other potential gameplay hazards. If you've ever watched a martial arts flick, you've probably noticed that mobs of bad guys always attack the lone hero one at a time. In an inspired move, Jade Empire follows suit by having its A.I. fighters attack you in waves, a gameplay mechanic that works to the player's advantage. The various mini-games, including an old-school scrolling shooter and an arena combat game, are also additive distractions.

#### Sweet, Sweet Chi

If you're anticipating a boring, stereotypical "Chinatown" visual style, then Jade Empire's lush, diverse environments will shatter your expectations; they simply radiate with artistry. The character models are somewhat less consistent in quality: The main characters boast fantastic detail, but the NPCs and enemies have a blocky, low-polygon look that clashes with the game's otherwise gleaming visuals. The soft, soothing music is so ethereal that you'll barely even notice it, but the so-so voice acting is a disappointment. Aside from the gravel-throated talents of the always-delightful Brian Doyle-Murray (as Qui the Promoter), many of the actors in Jade Empire sound confused or just flat-out bored.



**PROTIP:** The Spirit Thief style inflicts no damage but replenishes your Chi with every strike. Chi is used for healing wounds (hold down the White button), which makes Spirit Thief an invaluable tool for long, tough fights, such as the early brawl with Stronger Jiao.

There are just enough rough edges—erratic frame rates, astronomically long load times, and the aforementioned camera problems—to suggest that Jade Empire may have benefited from a few extra months of development polish. But no matter: In the end, the game is still hopelessly engrossing and thoroughly replayable. What were you expecting? Hey, this is BioWare we're talking about here. —Vicous Sid

**KEY MOMENT:** Entering Focus mode to kick the crap out of an opponent in slo-mo Matrix style



Developer: BioWare Publisher: Microsoft  
\$49.99 Available now: PC, PS2, Xbox 360, Wii, PS3, Xbox 360

## Five Deadly DVDs

Jade Empire is an homage to kung-fu fantasy, so here are some DVDs to get you in the fighting spirit. You gotta stop playing sometime, right?

#### Once Upon a Time in China 2 (1992)



Jet Li returns in what some fans consider to be the best film in the epic Once Upon a Time in China series. Who knew that a wet rag could be so deadly?

#### Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)



Yes, it was overhyped. But it's also a classic kung-fu flick. Give it a second chance—the crazy weaponry (poison-dart style, anyone?) is reason enough.

#### Iron Monkey (1993)



Quentin Tarantino brought a leaner, meaner translation of this kung-fu classic to the U.S. Keep your eyes peeled for sly references to the Once Upon a Time in China series.

#### Five Deadly Venoms (1978)



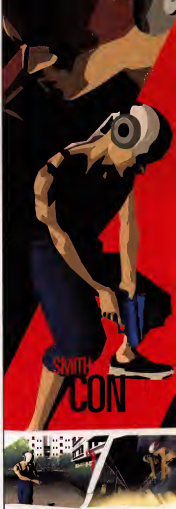
In Five Deadly Venoms, each kung-fu master mimics a different poisonous animal: snake, lizard, centipede, scorpion, and toad. And you thought improving your martial-arts technique in Jade Empire was a challenge?

#### The Storm Riders (1998)



The Storm Riders is based on a popular comic book, which helps explain the larger-than-life swordplay. Connoisseurs of outrageous hand-to-hand combat—Dragon Ball Z fans, we're looking in your direction—will find much to love.

# Killer7



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Read about fundiegamer's racing exploits and driving-sim grips.



**PROTIP:** Until you're thoroughly familiar with each track, it's best to use the Suggested Line—it's extremely effective (almost to the point of cheating).



PLACE 2/8



LAP 1/2  
RACE 00:35.300  
LAP 00:31.848

CAR AHEAD - 00:00.258  
CAR BEHIND + 00:01.481



**PROTIP:** Body kits don't always just give you better down force and handling—some are more for aesthetics and will actually bog down your car.



**PROTIP:** No matter how savvy you are, it's best to keep the ABS on—it's too easy to lock the wheels without it.



## Forza Motorsport

**Compelling racing sims have been absent from the Xbox for too long—Microsoft has not only filled that gap but also redefined the genre.**



Until now, the Gran Turismo franchise's comfortable pace of sequels kept its competitors at bay, lapping the futile efforts from the likes of ToCA Race Driver and Project Gotham Racing. That's all set to change, however, with the emergence of Forza Motorsport, a Gran Turismo killer that will send Polyphony Digital sulking back to the pits.

### Passione

For many auto enthusiasts, the introduction of Ferrari and Porsche vehicles in a robust driving simulator will reignite interest in the genre—after all, there's only so many times a person can drive an RUF before wanting to step into a Testarossa or 959. While being able to drive classic cars, commuter cars (RSX, Eclipse), and mid-life-crisis sports cars is fun, the impressive selection of ultraexotics, such as the Mercedes SLR, really makes you want to work your way up the career mode.

Forza doesn't stop there. In addition to detailed suspension/transmission tuning on par with Gran Turismo 4's, the game also caters to the import tuner crowd with its mammoth visual customization features. Your purchased

cars are no longer fenced-off museum pieces only to be gazed at; they can be molded to your aesthetic desires with body kits and custom graphics and paint.

The driving itself offers an unparalleled experience of adrenaline, action, and refinement. The lush graphics and usage of anti-aliasing make the "other" racer look spartan in contrast, and the plethora of sounds contributes to a vibrantly immersive ride. Scratch your precious 360 Modena on the side railings, and you'll hear a troubling concerto of scuffles. Bang it into a wall, and the heart-breaking crunch of metal will fill your ears. With damage modeling, there's a whole new set of challenges—and enjoyment. While overall too forgiving (we haven't yet seen a car get totaled or its wheels fall off), it strikes a pleasant balance between fun and realism.

One of the biggest downides to racing simulators is a steep learning curve, but Microsoft has integrated a dynamic Suggested Line feature that tells you exactly when to brake and what line to follow, making the game approachable even for the greenest of drivers.

### Drive-by-Wire

Another sorely missed feature from "that other racer" is online play—and Forza executes this masterfully. The game steams along when playing against eight other racers over Xbox Live without any signs of lagging or slow down. When online, even your lap times in the single-



**PROTIP:** Not all class rankings are equal in Forza Motorsport. An A1 class Civic Si will likely get roasted by an A1 Ferrari.

player career mode are saved and tracked to the Scoreboard—an incentive to master each course. Finding and setting up matches is a breeze, and the option to form car clubs will undoubtedly forge devoted online communities.

Forza is easily the best driving game ever made. Loyal GT4 fans ought to strap into the seat of this hot rod and take it for a spin—you won't look back.—Funky Zealot

**KEY MOMENT:** Keeping the pressure on a player over Xbox Live by staying on his car's tail, then watching him eat dirt on a hairpin turn.



**GAMEPRO.COM** FOR AN IN-DEPTH COMPANION OF GRAN TURISMO 4 AND FORZA MOTORSPORT, OF THE STRIKING AND UNUSUAL OF EACH FRANCHISE.



GRAPHICS ..... 5.0  
SOUND ..... 4.5  
CONTROL ..... 5.0



Developer and publisher: Microsoft ■ \$49.99  
Available now ■ Racing ■ 2 players, 8 online ■ ESRB E

## NARC



Older video-game fans will remember Midway's mid-1980s arcade game, NARC. Controversy brewed over the game's strong drug themes then, and its 21st-Century progeny bears the same stigma. However, if you look past the hoopla, you'll find an enjoyable action/adventure game for adults at a bargain price to boot.

## Grand Theft NARC

In NARC, you take on the role of two undercover agents and battle the forces of a crime lord, who's pushing a superdrug called Liquid Soul. The gameplay is very similar to that in the Grand Theft Auto series, featuring third-person-perspective action, a vast, free-roaming urban environment, and mini-missions that advance the story line. The GTA analogy also is warranted as NARC is a Mature-rated game with extremely violent scenes that involve plenty of gunplay, liberal use of profanity, and adult themes.

The graphics are solid, especially the cinematic cut-scenes, but the game's appeal is lowered by recurring pop-up, especially when dealing with corners and tight spaces. The controls are quite responsive, offering a wide assortment of combat moves, but the weak camera hinders them. A Hollywood ensemble cast delivers strong voice performances, and NARC's 1970s retro-hits soundtrack moves the story along nicely.

## An Action "Fix"

GTA fans needing a "fix" during the years-long wait for the next installment won't be disappointed with NARC, especially with its \$19.95 price tag, as it delivers a solid bang for your buck. NARC's controversial focus on extensive drug use is also a hook for this game but not in an exploitative sense.

You can choose to play as either the "good cop" and follow all the rules, or the "bad cop" and break the law by taking drugs to achieve your goals.

Each choice has direct ramifications on your ability to finish the game. Just as in real life, the temptation to take the drugs in the game is realistic, but so are the drastic consequences, thereby raising NARC above just another violent action-shoot-em-up status.—Dr. Zombie

**KEY MOMENT:** Giving into temptation and partaking in the drugs you're carrying. All you have to do is push a button—it's a little too eerily close to reality.

DrZombie.com

Dr. Zombie experiences being interviewed about NARC and video-game violence on NBC's Today Show.



GAMERHELP.COM FOR THE LATEST CODES AND CHEATS FOR NARC

PS2	GRAPHICS	4.5	FUN FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND	4.0		
X-BOX	GRAPHICS	4.0		
	SOUND	4.0		
	CONT. DL.	3.5		

Developer: Point of View Publisher: Midway \$19.95  
ESRB Rating: M (Mature) 17+ Ages: 17+ Player: 1 ESRB: M



**PRO TIP:** Enemies don't have great aim in NARC. Hugging alongside walls enables you to clip against them without taking much damage.



**PRO TIP:** Solitary pedestrians are more likely to buy your dope than those walking in crowds.



**PRO TIP:** Soften up the person you're trying to collar with a couple of body shots before you grapple with them.

# killer7

## COYOTE SMITH



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# Predator: Concrete Jungle



The irony of the prolific bloodshed in *Predator: Concrete Jungle* is that the game itself lacks a heart. When the protagonist rips out a spine in a beautiful and gory flourish, one wonders why so much thought went into the abundance of finishing moves and so little into the core gameplay.

## Let Us Prey

You're an alien hunter who disgraces himself in 1930s America only to return a century later on a quest of redemption, which more or less amounts to killing people in brutally creative ways. These over-the-top slaughters are where the fun begins...and ends. You can impale an enemy on your glaive, launch him skyward, and then halve him on the way down. You can also snap a spine over your

knee, or slam a face into brick wall. The violence is inventive, varied, graphic, and profanity laden; *Predator* earns its Mature rating with zeal. But as many deadly attacks as there are, you can perform them only so many times before they grow old, and there's little else to hold your interest.

## Face Plants and Face Paint

It seems that the designers couldn't decide whether to make an action/platformer or a stealthy suspensefest, so they did both poorly. Your tools include a programmable smart disc weapon, vocal mimicry, and a mask with three enhanced modes of sight, but these interesting elements go to waste in arbitrary level designs that inflict one non sequitur objective after another, are populated by a witless collection of unfunny stereotypes, and are navigated with strangely limited controls. Jumping 30 feet isn't fun when you can't direct that momentum with any freedom or certainty, thanks in part to a camera that insists



**PRO TIP:** Hit all the question marks and find power-ups you can. The flowers can reveal bonus missions that reward you with up grades, and the latter gives you vital items for your arsenal.

on getting too close even on manual. Imagine Super Mario Bros. with the bottom of your screen missing.

There are probably fanatics out there who will require this game, but even they aren't likely to find much lasting fun beneath *Predator*'s blood-drenched veneer. —*Ouranos*

**KEY MOMENT:** Discovering that the humans controlling the police mechs are hard-wired directly into the cockpit

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.0	FOR INFO
	SOUND	3.0	
	CONTROL	2.5	
		<b>2.0</b>	
Xbox	GRAPHICS	3.0	FOR INFO
	SOUND	3.0	
	CONTROL	2.5	
		<b>2.0</b>	

Developers: Eidos ■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Universal Games ■ \$39.99 ■ Available now ■ Action ■ 1 player ■ ESRB: M



**PRO TIP:** Not all levels have plentiful energy sources, so be careful of how much you rely on your power-draining stealth field.



**PRO TIP:** Change the camera control to manual immediately, or the automatic view will have you executing your TV instead of your enemies.

# Metal Slug 4 and 5 Bundle Pack



In retrospect, there's one side-scrolling arcade shooter series that has withstood the inevitable emergence of console and PC gaming dominance—*Metal Slug*. The series has attained irrefutable success by combining classic SNK 2D-programming quirkiness with utilitarian gaming designs. Old-school side-scrolling shooter fans can rejoice that *Metal Slug 4 and 5 Bundle Pack* accurately ports every little arcade morsel straight into your PS2.

## Flame Chop!

The *Bundle Pack* permeates with SNK's weird stylistic humor—including the silly yet fully functional status ailments and SNK's deliberate syntax faux pas. The games suffer no lag and sport a combined total of 11 levels with a few featuring branching paths.



**PRO TIP:** When your vehicle's health bar is low, simultaneously press Down and R1. This will eject you and send the vehicle forward with explosive results.



**PRO TIP:** Branching paths lead to secret areas with hidden hostages, items, and subbosses.

The only real notable additions to the series are a Dual Machine Gun weapon power-up for both *Metal Slug* titles and the ability to slide by simultaneously pressing Down and Jump in *Metal Slug 5*. Additionally, in *Metal Slug 5*, the tank has been completely redesigned—it can now transform from a tracked tank into a bi-pedal armored suit with the ability to limitedly boost for added platformability.

## "That Man Had a Family..."

Unfortunately, due to the nature of porting an arcade title to a console, both games suffer from stunted gameplay time—less than two hours combined! As the console titles have infinite credits, the goal of these games isn't to complete them through arcade mode but to replay the levels to acquire more hostages, items, and better mission-complete scores. Hostages can

be acquired only if you don't die during the entire level, and items are dropped by various hostages. It is unknown if these scores will unlock any additional material because the goals are virtually impossible to achieve.

The *Bundle Pack* is an excellent offering but is only recommended for the hardcore side-scrolling shooter fan due to the short gameplay time. —*Rice Burner*

**KEY MOMENT:** Remembering that when you eat too much food, your character will get fat, which increases your toughness but decreases your maneuverability



**PRO TIP:** Zombie form is one of the more powerful status ailments. Zombie mode can take out every character onscreen if used correctly.



PS2	GRAPHICS	4.0	FOR INFO
	SOUND	4.0	
	CONTROL	3.5	
		<b>4.0</b>	

Developers: Irem ■ Publisher: SNK ■ \$39.99 ■ Available now ■ Action ■ 2 players ■ ESRB: T ■ Also on the Xbox

# Dead to Rights II



Steven Seagal and Jean Claude Van Damme made big bank on movies like this: A renegade cop goes on a rampage against a brutal gang, and, in the course of righting whatever wrong has been committed, he brutally (and in myriad ways) dispatches a few hundred thugs for their crimes. No one nominated the actors for Oscars, but they did provide some mindless entertainment—the film equivalent of cotton candy. Namco's *Dead to Rights II* is much the same thing: Renegade cop (Jack Slate) goes on a rampage against thugs who have kidnapped a judge, and he gets the opportunity to brutally dispatch...well, you get the picture—and the cotton candy part, too.

## And Your Little Dog, Too...

Slate is an enterprising officer of the law. He finds a lot of weapons—pistols, shotguns, automatics, and more—to make his efforts easier, and he's able to disarm opponents to add to his supply. There's nothing like seeing Slate snag the bad guy's gun, pirouette around like a prima ballerina, and then blast him. He also has a mobile weapon: His trusty sidekick pup, Shadow, can take out the targeted enemy deftly (and somewhat invincibly).

The sequel has dropped the original game's diversionary mini-games in favor of unabashed action and mayhem. It's filled with nasty gunfights, Max Payne-like slow-motion shootouts, and more F-bombs than you'd hear at the Annual Cuss-Word Convention. Okay, so this cotton candy isn't that sweet....

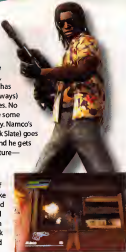
## The Camera Adds 10 POUNDINGS

Unfortunately, *Dead to Rights II* maintains its predecessor's graphics and camera glitchiness. Sometimes during gameplay, enemies sailed through doorways—before the door was even opened. Shadow seems to appear and disappear more often than David Copperfield. The perspective spins and dives when you hit the target button or go through a corridor, which makes it more than a little difficult to keep from getting blasted by enemies early and often.

Though the original's mini-games often felt out of place, they did break up the gunplay. Without them here, you'll probably find that the battles, while cotton-candy fun, are quite monotonous and increasingly difficult (even without the camera wonkiness).

Despite the game's flaws, Namco has created a series with lots of entertainment potential. Maybe the publisher ought to come up with some new ideas, start fresh, and wipe the Slate clean.—*Manny LaMarcha*

**KEY MOMENT:** Every single time you slow down the action and take out a foe with a dramatic dive, it will make you grin.



**PRO TIP:** Get good at tossing a canister and then quickly targeting it—but don't fire until it's close to a pack of enemies—to help your trek go a bit smoother.



**PRO TIP:** Flatten yourself against a wall, peek around, and then target an exploding object instead of criminals. Then, shoot to blow it up from the safety of the corner for satisfying results.



**PRO TIP:** If you stick behind cover for too long, badies will start tossing firebombs in your direction. Keep moving, and you'll end up taking less flame damage.

PS2	GRAPHICS	3.5	FOR PCE	3.0
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	3.5		
XBOX	GRAPHICS	3.5	FOR PCE	3.0
	SOUND	3.5		
	CONTROL	3.5		

Developer: Namco/Widescreen Games Publisher: Namco  
\$49.99 Available now Action 1 player ESRB: M



www.killer7.com

# Samurai Western



The name alone conjures up images of a strange game-genre mash-up: "Samurai" for graceful but deadly maneuvers and "Western" for frantic and brutal gunplay in the streets and deserts. Indeed, the first cinematic you see when you start up *Samurai Western* is a scene of one sword-swinging Asian character and three cowboy-up'd riflemen done in silhouette.

## The Good...

Despite the fact that the hero character, Gojiro Kiryu, is being assaulted by an endless procession of dusty dudes, gunslingers, and TNT tossers, this is a distinctly martial-arts game—not surprising



**PRO TIP:** Dodging the machine gunner requires pumping the B2 button repeatedly—and it earns you a good ol' "Hot Dang!"

considering developer Spike's roots as the creator of the *Tenchu* franchise. *Samurai Western* is a simply designed game that's easy to pick up and play. Button mashers will enjoy pounding away on the controller to slice and dice; artists of the directional pad will like carefully timing a dodge to deflect back bullets and knives at their foes and unleash more powerful jump attacks.

The games offers an opportunity to improve your fighter RPG-like as he grows in experience. Stat points can be allocated among his attributes (such as health and defense skills), and equipment he picks up along the way can alter his stats and attack style. Plus, any accessories you have equipped are accurately represented in the cut scenes—a nice design feature.

## ...The Bad and The Ugly

While *Samurai Western* is a somewhat standard hack-n-slash with a quirky setting, it doesn't hold up for two main reasons: lack of polish and much-needed variety. Graphically, Gojiro passes through many of the boxes, barrels, and other items lining his path, yet hits invisible barriers that prevent him from having full access to seemingly open areas, which is just plain sloppy considering the strength of today's console hardware. The camera



**PRO TIP:** Take advantage of the defensive benefits that you get from picking up an item, such as a chair or a box, and facing on enemy with it as a shield.



**PRO TIP:** When you have a chance to use a new accessory, check out its stats to see if it will help—or hinder—you.

often pivots wildly—a distraction that becomes life threatening when you're trying to keep gunmen from draining the remaining color on your health meter. And, though it's fun at first to hear your pursuers cussing and barking threats, that too soon sours as the same phrases are repeated over and over and over....

*Samurai Western* could have been a stylish gallop through the Wild West, but it ends up yanking back on the reins, leaving you championing at the bit on a one-trick pony ride.

—Manny LaMancha

**KEY MOMENT:** When you first see an enemy drop from a bullet you deflected back, you know you're at one with your sword, Grasshopper.



GRAPHICS ..... 3.5  
SOUND ..... 3.0  
CONTROL ..... 3.0



Developer: Spike Publisher: Atus \$29.99  
Available now Action/Adventure 2 players ESRB: M

# Haunting Ground

Haunting Ground casts you as Fiona, a skimpily clad waif whose last memories are of a car crash with her parents. How she arrived in this



**PRO TIP:** If you camp out in the same hiding spot too often, your unwanted suitor will get wise and you'll find yourself mauled into submission.



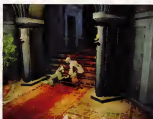
In *Haunting Ground*, Hewie is man's—er, woman's best friend.

ancient castle is a mystery, but there are more pressing concerns—like the ham-fisted thug with the body and mind of a side of beef who's after her.

## Ready or Not, Here He Comes

There's little choice but to run and hide, and this reality defines the gameplay: Time is divided between exploring, solving the requisite puzzles of questionable logic, and hiding. You're not without assistance, however, and Hewie, the white Alsatian, is an inspired addition. You can order him to explore an area, attack a pursuer, and even fetch. The potential of this partnership isn't fully explored, but it doesn't feel like an empty gimmick either. The game's alchemical item creation nonsense isn't as fortunate.

Haunting Ground's visuals are stark but appealing with bright blues and reds jumping out from the dominant grays. Though strangely, many areas where you'd expect a film noirish spread between light and dark seem washed out. On the other hand, a panic effect drastically changes the look of the game as the heroine gets upset. The images become grainy, and missed frames and motion blur make recovering a challenge. The cinematics feature remarkable facial expressions, conveying a range of emotional response not seen before in this genre. Paired with some convincing "handheld" camera scripting, the effect is powerful, and easily provides Haunting Ground's most compelling moments—If only the repetitive gameplay were up to the same standard.



**PRO TIP:** If Hewie does something you ask of him, make sure you praise him. It will make him more responsive to future commands.

## That Dog Won't Hunt

Despite a few fresh ideas, *Haunting Ground* is no classic. The thin story relies too often on clichés and titillation, the villains aren't terribly frightening, and the gameplay is predictable. Ultimately, this is *Resident Evil* Lite with a dog. If you've already played the better horror titles, there's enough here to keep you entertained for a short time, just as long as you don't expect too much. —Guroboros

**KEY MOMENT:** Knocking Deiblitaz's enormous, lumbering mass off a second story ledge and then realizing he's still coming



GRAPHICS ..... 4.0  
SOUND ..... 3.5  
CONTROL ..... 3.0



Developer and publisher: Capcom \$19.99  
Available now Adventure/Fantasy 1 player ESRB: M

# WWE: WrestleMania 21



For WWE: WrestleMania 21, THQ turned development duties over to Studio Gigante (Tao Feng). If you fear that the game maker—co-founded by John Tobias, who is best known as half of the team that created *Mortal Kombat*—might opt for a wrestling game that's gory and gruesome, you can relax. The game doesn't feature fatalities, projectiles snaking out of a fighter's palm, or blood. In fact, no liquid other than some sweat and, of course, Triple H's trademark water spray graces the ring.

What we do get is a number of improvements. For instance, the presentation—not only the fighter introductions and the wrestling itself, but also the game's interface—is bright and loud with every selection clanging onto the screen. The sound effects are crisp, taking you right into the ring with each blow landed and every body slammed down onto the mat.

## Yo, Nice Selection, Bra?

WrestleMania 21 also offers loads of gameplay variety, including Tag Team, Battle Royal, Royal Rumble, and, yes, the Bra and Panty match, too. A deep Career mode will keep you busy as you lead your handcrafted wrestler through the ranks of big-name WWE brawlers.

Most exciting is the game's multiplayer capabilities. Not only can you engage in a free-for-all with up to four players on the same screen, but you can also open the door for some global grappling with Xbox Live.



**PRO TIP:** Don't try to put a pin on your opponent too quickly. Work on him, adjust him up, and when he doesn't have anything left, tack him to the mat.



**PRO TIP:** In a Cage match, press X while moving the directional pad toward the cage to shake your opponent off the fence and back into the ring.



**PRO TIP:** The key to wrestling success is to learn the timing of reversals and counters so that you don't get yourself pounded on too extensively.



**PRO TIP:** It's not all about grappling; you can pick up a vital Heat Boost by taunting your foe during a match.

create. Glitches aside, it's nice to see the progress that THQ has made. *WrestleMania 21* is a satisfying scrap that will keep you mashing buttons if for nothing else than to see Stacy Kiebler in her bitmapped bra and pixel panties.

—Manny LaMarcha

**KEY MOMENT:** When you unleash a stunning Finishing move on your opponent, you'll feel like you're 6'7" and a buff 280 pounds.



Developer: Studio Gigante Publisher: THQ \$49.99  
Available on: Wrestling #1 players #1997

STEP INTO THE MIND OF AN ASSASSIN

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1 DEADLY CRIME SYNDICATE

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Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence  
Sexual Themes  
Strong Language



PlayStation 2



## Juiced



When it comes to driving games, there are two kinds of enthusiasts: the autocross-obsessed racers, who toil over the ultimate suspension setup, and the cosmetic tuners, who absorb all the misinformation that *The Fast and the Furious* has to offer. *Juiced* caters to the latter.

## NOS...I Need More NOS!

For those who think putting jumbo jet-sized wings on a FWD car makes handling better, *Juiced* is nitrous fantasy come true. You can slap turbos and N<sub>2</sub>O systems together without fear of blowing your engine. In this simplistic world, the more expensive and powerful, the better.

Annoyingly, though, the game doesn't immediately let you buy whatever upgrade or car

you want; instead, through winning races, you gradually unlock more modifications, "Crew" drivers, and cars. The forced linearity becomes frustrating as you have to grind through racing events to get the tricked-out ride you desire. Earning respect is a hassle, too: Opponents often run into you during races, lowering their respect toward you.

## Granny-Shifting

As *Need for Speed Underground* and *Midnight Club* showed, racing games don't need to be realistic to be fun—but the deathblow to *Juiced* is a physics engine that makes driving more difficult than in *Gran Turismo 4*. Watch your 350Z spin out simply by letting go of the gas and turning the steering wheel.

Combine the dull career mode, spin-out crazy physics, and average graphics, and you get a ride evoking the same emotions as when DIX Civics buzz down the street with coffee-

can mufflers late at night.

—Funky Zealot

**KEY MOMENT:** Seeing your "Respect" increase only because you've added an underbody neon to your ride



**PRO TIP:** On RWD cars, *Juiced* requires you to countersteer a lot earlier and harder than what you're probably used to.



**PRO TIP:** The biggest threat to damaging your car is a nitrous leak. Once you've used all your nitrous, you can bang into walls to your heart's content.



**PRO TIP:** When you see "Slow Down" or "Brake Now" onscreen, it usually means that you need to start braking in a few seconds—the brakes are stronger than those in most racing games.



GRAPHICS ..... 4.0  
SOUND ..... 3.0  
CONTROL ..... 2.0

IGN RATING  
3.0

Developer: Juice Games Publisher: THQ MSRP: \$49.99  
Available June Racing 4 players ESRB: T



# Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition

Midnight Club 3 looked to add some high-profile style and attitude when it hooked up with DUB magazine, which specializes in showcasing stars with their cars. DUB Edition features some mighty bling on wheels, but this urban street-racing stalwart turns out to have some go with its show, too.

## Street Smart

To its credit, Midnight Club 3 let's its performance on the road do all the talking. The controls grip the asphalt like the claws of a tiger to produce arcade-driving action that's as good



**PRO TIP:** If you really want to win, sometimes you have to give up your paint job and cut off the other guy.

as it gets. The PS2 driving is particularly tight, while the Xbox has a slightly softer feel. Both versions, however, do an excellent job of pumping up the sensation of over-the-top speed. There's a challenge for every taste, too, as the game offers 10 modes of play, including a metal-mashing version of tag. Jumping into regular street races, or just cruising around, looking for action. The most fun are probably the free-roaming Cruise and Career modes. In both, you tool around town to hunt for the local talent. Street kings or entire car clubs are all waiting to test your racing skills.

Both console versions paint decent visuals. The nighttime looks are good enough to establish an edgy, high-octane atmosphere. However, you're usually moving so fast that you won't notice the details in the buildings or the panic-stricken pedestrians anyway. The wheelwork takes place in three urban locals—Detroit, Atlanta, and San Diego (where the game was developed)—but you'd be hard pressed to tell them apart or identify the local landmarks.

## Club Meets DUB

The DUB connection exerts its muscle back in the garage. You can buy 50 licensed cars and motorcycles, and upgrade appearance (including paint and decals), body aerodynamics, and handling with a ton of licensed add-ons. You have to earn cash to do it, but once you build up your bank, you can feed your automotive personality to customize any style of rig you like, from imports (mostly European) to SUVs to



**PRO TIP:** Catch some air, and you could leap right over the other cars, especially if you fend off your Slipstream Turbo.

muscle cars. The auto graphics definitely shine throughout this racer.

Whether you're into tuning or just customizing your ride, Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition is more than roadworthy. —Atomic Dingo

**KEY MOMENT:** You're trailing the leaders in a tight race, but at the finish line you jam the Slipstream Turbo button to blast by them.

brobuzz.com

Bro Buzz seeks out the DUB in Midnight Club 3.

PS2	GRAPHICS	..... 9.0	NEW FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND CONTROL	..... 8.5		
Xbox	GRAPHICS	..... 9.0	NEW FACTOR	4.0
	SOUND CONTROL	..... 8.0		

Developer: Rockstar San Diego Publisher: Rockstar Games  
\$49.99 Available now Driving 1 players, 8 online ESRB: E10+

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TEEN



Violence  
Language

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BATMAN BEGINS IN THEATRES SUMMER 2005

BE THE REASON PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF THE DARK.

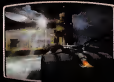
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Fear becomes your weapon when you strike terror in the hearts of your adversaries.



Tear through Gotham streets in the Batmobile, using advanced weapons and technology to threaten those who stand in the way of justice.



Use your ninja combat skills to take-on your enemies and extract vital information.

PlayStation 2

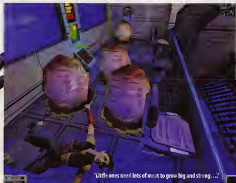
GAME BOY ADVANCE



# The Five Best PC Games

Sometimes, for various reasons, a truly memorable game is released and doesn't get nearly the respect (or the sales) it deserves. If you don't have these five games in your library, you're just a PC poseur. By Vicious Sid

*You've Never Played*



"Little ones need lots of love to grow big and strong..."



The Ophion Motif is one of the creepiest enemies you'll ever encounter.



The final minutes of the game take place inside the guts of the The Many. Icky!

## [1] System Shock 2

**You thought Doom 3 was scary? Then you obviously don't know fear. System Shock 2 is the greatest game to ever go "bump" in the night.**

System Shock 2 isn't just any game—it's the ultimate gamer's game: a freaky Frankenstein cobbled together with spare parts from other killer genres. At heart, it's a down-and-dirty RPG; but that pulsing heart resides in the sleek body of a lethal FPS machine. This fusion of meat and metal is what makes System Shock 2 one of the most inspired, demented, and amazing games ever made. If you still haven't played it, you're missing the fight of your life.

### "Steel Yourself for a Struggle, Human"

You're a cybernetically enhanced soldier who awakens aboard a blood-spattered ghost ship. You quickly find yourself locked into a vicious

power struggle between The Many, a vile species of telepathic parasites, and SHODAN, a scheming computer A.I. with delusions of grandeur. SHODAN is a magnificent character: Her voice alone is unforgettable, a tidal wave of crazed digital gibbering and mocking whispers. SHODAN is one of the most devious, terrifyingly omnipotent antagonists ever conceived, so it was a masterstroke that the game designers made her your one and only friend. When your closest ally is a homicidal program that loathes your "disgusting flesh," you know you're stuck between a rock and the hardest place ever.

### "They've Killed My Men... And Now They've Killed Me"

System Shock 2's atmospheric visuals are effective, but its bone-chilling audio is downright revolutionary. The deformed, parasitized crewmembers gurgle ominous warnings ("They see you! Run!") as they move in for the kill. And the murderous monkeys that prowled the halls of the Von Braun let out piercing shrieks that will make you wet your spacetuit. Even the voice acting is distinctive and memorable. This is one game you'll want to play with the lights dimmed and the sound pumped.

Folks, you just can't miss this one. Even though the game is six years old, it was way, way ahead of its time. A handful of games have carried on in its tradition—most notably, Warren Spector's outstanding Deus Ex series—but pound for pound, nothing can match System Shock 2. You can still find it for a reasonable price on eBay, but don't wait—availability is tight because the game sold poorly. System Shock 3?

Don't bet on it; your only chance is to pester EA, who holds the rights. The good news is that many of the folks responsible for System Shock 2 are currently hard at work on BioShock, a sort of spiritual successor. Rest assured, we'll be covering BioShock closely as it nears release. In the meantime, give System Shock 2 a go. It makes games like Doom 3 and Half-Life 2 seem like church.

Developer: Looking Glass Studios (RIP)  
Publisher: EA Games • Released: July 1999

[blogcore.com](http://blogcore.com)

Is Vicious Sid out of his mind? Have your own underrated PC classic at [blogcore.com](http://blogcore.com).



These full-grown founders will shred you in seconds. Use incendiary weapons!



The ghostly environments certainly don't sleep on the gore.

## Same Shock, New System

Thanks to the devotion of System Shock 2 diehards, players can download dramatically enhanced textures and redesigned character models. Both System Shock 2 Rebirth and the Shock Texture Upgrade Project are well worth installing.



The worm hybrid before the Rebirth mod.



The worm hybrid after the Rebirth mod.

[2]

## Thief: Deadly Shadows

Like its protagonist Garret, this game definitely succeeded in sticking to the shadows—maybe that explains why so few people bought it. That's a damn shame because *Deadly Shadows* is almost certainly the best pure stealth title ever conceived. The writing and character voice-overs are unforgettable as well. It takes some patience to master the controls, but once you make the connection, you'll be hooked forever and ever. Key recommendation: Play from the optional third-person view.

■ Developer: Ion Storm (RUP) ■ Publisher: Talon  
■ Released: May 2001 ■ Also on the Xbox



## The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay—Developer's Cut

Forget about *Van Diesel's* crappy action movies for just a moment. Even if this neglected classic starred *My Little Pony*, it would still be Riddick-ulously entertaining. It features a combination of *Splinter Cell*-like stealth segments and the sleek, deadly FPS action you know from games like *Half-Life 2*. It's a visual powerhouse, too, rendering ultra-realistic visuals that ultimately surpass even those of the mighty *Doom 3*. Definitely the most amazing movie-licensed game ever released.

■ Developer: Starbreeze Studios ■ Publisher: Visceral Games  
■ Released: December 2004 ■ Also on the Xbox



[3]

[4]

## Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War

Did you play the strategy game of 2004? Well, why not? You don't need to be a Warhammer dork or a dihearth strategy god to appreciate the simple pleasures of *Dawn of War's* RTS-lite gameplay. *Dawn of War's* streamlined interface doesn't offer as much flexibility as *Warcraft III's*, but it keeps the game uber-accessible and hopelessly addictive. *Dawn of War* is one of those rare titles that will appeal to any player, regardless of their gaming habits. Bring on the expansion pack!

■ Developer: Relic Entertainment  
■ Publisher: THQ ■ Released: September 2004



## Dungeons & Dragons: Temple of Elemental Evil



Troika's fate was sealed after releasing this gorgeous, gawky RPG, which combined nuts-and-bolts D&D battlefield strategy with some groundbreaking story line elements (such as a straight-faced same-sex marriage). The numerous bugs were a real problem that Troika was unable to fix—they did solve, remember? But the fact the game's devoted fans released their own patch to fix those errors and add new features testifies to the game's lasting influence. RPG fans should invest immediately.

■ Developer: Troika (RUP)  
■ Publisher: Atari  
■ Released: September 2003

[blogcore.com](http://blogcore.com)

Looking for fan-made patches for *Temple of Elemental Evil*? Let *Wideside* show you the light.



[5]

## Dungeon Siege II

With a bevy of new features and a grand Lord of the Rings-inspired quest, developer Gas Powered Games seems to be doing everything possible in this sequel to please fans of the Dungeon Siege world. Among the additions are a revamped combat system (with new spells and skills), a fresh artistic style, smarter A.I., and an all-new character customization feature. The action remains fast, bloody, and chaotic, but the simple interface belies a pleasantly complex (but not overwhelming) battle system that should be familiar to fans of the series. In creating a personalized character, players choose from four differently skilled races (Human, Elf, Dwarf, and Half-Giant) to suit their style of play and then develop individual skills and tailor their fighter via a branching system of experience-based abilities, not unlike Diablo II's skill tree system.

Though still incomplete, *Dungeon Siege II* already boasts an impressive level of crisp visual detail and an appropriate magic-and-monsters style soundtrack. The all-important camera control scheme functions beautifully and enables you to easily manipulate busy battles by zooming and rotating their perspective via simple and intuitive mouse movements. Plus, the point-and-click style of real-time, team-based combat found in the first *Dungeon Siege* remains nearly unchanged and is a cinch to pick up, making the action accessible to old pros and newbies alike. Unfortunately, the online multiplayer feature was disabled in the version we played, but it will obviously be up and running by the time *Dungeon Siege II* ships in August. —Bones-in-Britain

■ **Ready-to-Go** ■ Developer: Gas Powered Games ■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Target release date: August



## Half-Life 2: Aftermath

*Half-Life 2* was a technical dynamo, but its ending left many players wanting more. Luckily, they're about to get precisely that. *Half-Life 2: Aftermath* will pick up immediately following HL2's somewhat cryptic ending, which sees Gordon destroying the alien Citadel. Details concerning the Aftermath expansion are scarce, but we do know that in the single-player mode, you'll once again star as quantum physicist Gordon Freeman. *Half-Life 2*'s supporting cast, Alyx and Dog, will also play key roles. Story line details are MIA, but with any luck, we'll finally get a peek at the Combine homeland. Expect G-Man to make an appearance, too.

Gordon will start the game with the overcharged Über Gravity Gun from the end of HL2, but Valve's Doug Lombardi went one step further by saying that the innovative weapon will have "many new uses." What-ever that means. As for new weapons, new enemies, and new vehicles, Valve remains characteristically tight-lipped, but it's a safe bet that Aftermath will expand in those areas. It's too early to say about multiplayer enhancements, but Valve is considering upgrading HL2: Deathmatch with content from the single-player game. *Half-Life 2: Aftermath* debuts this summer through Valve's Steam service and traditional retail outlets. —Vicous Sid

■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Valve Software ■ Publisher: Vivendi Universal Games ■ Target release date: Summer 2005



Your kingdom has come...  
... and history awaits you!

# Romance X of The Three Kingdoms

June 2005

- Play as any officer! Choose from five ranks: Sovereign, Viceroy, Prefect, Vassal, or Free Officer.
- Debate with other officers and officials and master the politics of war.
- Start a rogue army, fulfill civilian requests, forestall disaster, and more.
- Regional conflicts escalate into large-scale wars as the fighting spreads. The constant threat of enemy campaigns adds a new level of tension!
- Over 200 dramatic events viewed differently by each character.



Screenshots are subject to future development changes.



Mild Language  
Mild Violence  
Use of Alcohol

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PlayStation 2





**PRO TIP:** Speed attacks (blue icon) are easy to land and are best aimed for weaker enemies. Power attacks (red icon) are tougher to land and are better suited against more powerful enemies.

Every time you jack in, you get to watch the world slowly fill in around you. It's an awesome effect in *The Matrix Online*.



**PRO TIP:** Don't even think about fighting until you've located several points into your loaded-in ability. Just run missions errands until you've built up the required experience points.



**PRO TIP:** To activate the main story line missions, open your cell phone menu and click on Mission. Hey, in a game as complicated as *The Matrix Online*, every little bit helps. ...

## The Matrix Online

blogcore.com

**The Matrix Online is disappointing not because it's a terrible game but because its source material deserves nothing less than graceful, flawless execution.**

Learn more about *Vicious Sin's* experience playing *The Matrix Online*.

There's no question that *The Matrix* mythology fits effortlessly into the massively multiplayer online genre. Tell that to the designers of *The Matrix Online*, Sega's mixed attempt to cash in on the lucrative massively multiplayer market. Neo diehards will likely find *The Matrix Online* to be a worthwhile diversion, but World of Warcraft fiends will merely shrug.

### "Trinityyyyy!"

The game begins immediately following Neo's death with the Machines and the Zionists engaged in a sort of Cold War. As your character gains experience, you can select abilities from three distinct classes: Operative (which includes martial artists, gun fighters, and infiltrators), Coder (primarily a crafter and summoner), and Hacker (a combination healer/offensive mage). *The Matrix Online* even enables you to reassign your character's skill points, which is an especially useful feature in group-based missions. You aren't locked into working for the Zion rebellion, either; later in the game, you'll uncover opportunities to join the cold-blooded

Machines or the crafty, Machiavellian followers of the Merovingian. So far, so good, right?

Without a doubt, a great deal of thought went into creating *The Matrix Online*. Nonetheless, the game developers made several ill-advised design decisions that nearly bring the entire experience to a standstill. For starters, the hyperactive interface is anything but streamlined: The game's multi-colored menus constantly compete for your attention. And the built-in AOL Instant Messenger is just a silly, obtrusive marketing ploy ("the future of the world depends on AIM, d00d!"). *The Matrix Online's* city is huge but feels vacant, and the missions instantly succumb to standard hunt-and-fetch conventions. But the cryptic combat system is definitely the biggest complaint. Buying abilities and "loading" them into your character is a cool concept, but employing them in actual battles is often painful. Combat actions interact in some sort of intricate rock-paper-scissors scheme, but even after you've completed the bare-bones tutorial and practiced for hours, combat still feels like little more than educated guesswork. Sometimes, you'll



**PRO TIP:** Coders should buddy up with other, more combat-oriented players. The Create Remote Proxy ability is also useful as it summons a weaker simulacrum (that's Neo speak for "pet").



**PRO TIP:** If you're Buzzed (blue sparkles), Staggered (red arrows), or Off-Balance (green teeter-totters), you can usually recover by using your Block (yellow icon) action.



win (huzzah!); other times, you'll lose, but at no point do you ever feel like you're truly in control of your character. Speaking of control, the combat camera feels like it's essentially broken—keeping your character visible onscreen during a brawl is no small task.

#### Nee's Geo

The Matrix films are iconic thanks to their glossy special effects and dynamite costume design. For the most part, *The Matrix Online* carries on that proud tradition. The gritty urban environments look exquisitely detailed, and you'll gawk in wonder at the game's gleaming glass buildings, debel-swept streets, and weed-entangled parking lots—very, very pretty. So, it's a huge disappointment to see that the featureless interior environments, where you spend much of your time, are sparsely decorated and maddeningly repetitive. What gives? Luckily, *The Matrix Online* has a few more pleasant surprises, such as the slick digital wardrobes—not only do they endow you with special powers, but they also look cool enough that you almost wish you could click a "Buy This Outfit Now" button and get the real article shipped to you overnight. The graphics nicely capture the look and feel of the films, but it's the sound, from the ethereal music (courtesy of Don Davis, who scored the films) to the wince-inducing cracks and thuds of combat, that makes you feel like you're really inside the Matrix.

#### (Bullet) Time Will Tell

Ultimately, one gets the distinct impression that the game is essentially one big work in progress. Sega should definitely capitalize on *The Matrix Online*'s sizeable Live Event staff, one of the game's key advantages. Even if the missions are lousy and the combat sucks, there's undeniable appeal in bumping into a staff member posing as Morpheus or the Architect. But for now, it's tough to recommend the game to anyone but Matrix true believers. Perhaps they can find out just how deep this rabbit hole goes or if it in fact goes anywhere at all. —Vicious Syd

**KEY MOMENT:** Kicking the crap out of a latex-wearing dominatrix, then stealing her gun, data files, and shoes

**Recommended System Specifications**  
 Windows XP/2000 3.0 GHz processor 700 MB RAM  
 7.0 GB or 10 GB free HD Space \$100/Collectible \$60 or higher video card  
 Internet connection required

**PC** GRAPHICS ..... 4.5  
 SOUND ..... 4.5  
 CONTROL ..... 3.0

**PG** FACTOR  
**3.5**

Developed by Monolith Publisher: Sega MSRP \$49.99 (plus \$14.99 per month)  
 Available now On-line RPG Massively multiplayer ESRB: T

## The Ultimate Matrix Collection

If *The Matrix Online* left a bad taste in your mouth, then *The Ultimate Matrix Collection* is the perfect palate cleanser. You can find this definitive 10-disc set for about \$60, and it includes all three films, the awesome *The Animatrix* series, plus mountains of documentaries, interviews, and rare artwork. If you're expecting audio commentary from the ever-elusive Wachowski brothers, though, keep on dreaming.

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The fight scenes look a little jerky, but the crazy choreography is still mostly intact.



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# PSP Versus DS

Don't wrack your brain with complex data specs about Sony's PSP and Nintendo's DS—we offer a practical guide on how to differentiate between the two hottest portables without using the dry numbers. By Four-Eyed Dragon

## Upcoming PSP Games You Must Own

### Burnout Legends

Published by EA Games  
Available Fall 2005

Super-fast frame rate and the simple objective of purposefully crashing your auto to cause the largest pileup are good reasons to look forward to this racer.



### Infected

Published by Nijesko  
Available October

This could be the first "real" first-person shooter for the PSP. The cool "Infected" feature will let you spread a virus to other PSPs, too.



### Namco Museum Battle Collection

Published by Namco  
Available Summer 2005

The emphasis is two-player competition with some of Namco's greatest arcade hits like Ms. Pac-Man, Galaga, and Galaxian.



<b>Weight and Size</b>	Nothing speaks better than a lightweight multimedia system your hands can easily wrap around...although it's just a little too big to fit in the pocket.
<b>Battery Life</b>	After watching a feature-long movie, anticipation of low battery life weighs in; it's best to charge after each use.
<b>Looks</b>	The classic personal classified ad description: slim, curves in the right places, and stylish.
<b>Graphics</b>	The wide screen enhances the truly awesome visuals, whether playing a game or watching a movie.
<b>Sound</b>	Built-in stereo speakers provide quality audio. The included earphones not only look sharp but also accommodate the sounds quite well.
<b>Media Formats</b>	This is not just a gaming machine; it also let's you watch films, play music, and download pictures using a memory stick and PC.
<b>Controls/Interface</b>	An analog stick makes all the difference, but the button layout feels cramped. Navigating through the interface, though, is a snap.
<b>Screen Durability</b>	The wide screen can get smudged easily and frequently. Be sure to bring a soft rag to wipe it down. The screen feels as though it can easily slip out of one's hands, too.
<b>Multi-player</b>	Most games available are much better when played on Wi-Fi. No slowdown and a continuous strong connection allow for lots of multiplayer fun.
<b>Future Potential</b>	Recent hacks into the hardware opened up a way to browse the web and watch homemade movies. The possibilities to use the PSP as a PDA as well as an all-in-one multimedia system aren't too far away.
<b>Games</b>	A strong library of games at launch guaranteed a resounding splash. Expect more high-profile games down the pipe that will fully utilize the system.
<b>Must-Have Game</b>	Wipeout Pure 
<b>Price</b>	At \$250 a pop, this thing doesn't come cheap. Compounded by pricey games, this system is definitely for those who have a disposable income.
<b>Overall Value</b>	If you can afford it, buy it...just be extra picky with the games you choose because they don't come cheap, either. The sleek design and the potential of becoming something much more than a game machine make the PSP a great investment.



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PlayStation 2



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The dimensions will remind you of the first generation flip cell phones with a gigantic battery pack attached. Surprisingly, it's still relatively light considering its bulky shape.

It's guaranteed that you won't play through a game until the battery dies—not because there's a strong battery but because your hands will get too cramped to continue playing.

It sure isn't pretty on the outside, but once opened, the elegant two-screen display commands your gaze just a bit longer.

Certainly not as high quality as the PSP's; the visuals can be likened to those of PlayStation games.

Standard stereo sound booms at good levels. Too bad the system wasn't packaged with earphones.

The PDA-like application, Pictochat, is a blast to use with other people. But Nintendo hasn't announced any use other than games for its system.

Using a touch screen to play games is ingenious, but the games that use it are a mixed bag. Simultaneously holding the system while pushing buttons and using a stylus can be overwhelming, too. And we're still waiting for games to take advantage of the built-in microphone.

Constantly rubbing the screen with a stylus can wear down the display. Try not to rub too hard, or you'll be sending the system in for repairs.

There's no problem connecting with others, whether just to chat and draw pictures, or to play games.

The hardware has a lot of potential with wireless options that can even involve a PC and more.

There really hasn't been an impressive lineup of games available. The second generation of titles looks much more promising.

Feel the Magic: XX/XX



It's the bargain of the two—and by a substantial amount. But with limited high-impact games, there's no real reason to buy it yet.

It's cheaper than the PSP, but it doesn't offer as much. The few select games available that effectively utilize the touch screen aren't enough to support the system, but the ability to play GBA games on it keeps it afloat...for now.

**Weight  
and Size**

**Battery  
Life**

**Looks**

**Graphics**

**Sound**

**Media  
Formats**

**Controls/  
Interface**

**Screen  
Durability**

**Multi-  
player**

**Future  
Potential**

**Games**

**Must-Have  
Game**

**Price**

**Overall  
Value**

## Upcoming DS Games You Must Own

### Animal Crossing

Published by Nintendo  
Available Fall 2005

Adventures in a quirky land where you explore, make friends, and participate in community events can never fail.



### Nintendogs

Published by Nintendo  
Available Fall 2005

Can't decide if you should get a dog? Try out this canine simulation first where your puppies follow your commands without making a mess.



### Castlevania

Published by Konami  
Available September

The Dracula storyline continues with what already looks like a fantastic adventure into vampire gaming lore.



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## Madden NFL 06

The Madden series may be the only official NFL football game in town, but the developers at EA Tiburon aren't kicking back on the sidelines. Madden NFL 06 is going on the offensive this season.

### Vision and Precision

In particular, the passing system showcases a new gameplay mechanic that invites players of all skill levels to rethink how they play the game. Vision and Precision Passing essentially requires the quarterback (you) to pick out receivers as a pass unfolds downfield. No more blind button pressing for "money" plays.

Based on the game's Awareness attribute for quarterbacks, pass plays activate a wedge-shaped field-of-vision indicator that looks sort of like a spotlight beam. The indicator highlights the area of the field that your QB is "looking" towards, and ideally that includes a receiver

or two. You swing the wedge around by moving the right stick (like turning your passer's head).

The QB's Awareness rating determines the size of the wedge. So for example, because Peyton Manning of the Colts has the highest Awareness in the game, his potential passing area is the largest, practically encompassing half the field! Highlighting an open receiver dramatically affects the likelihood of completing a pass. At the All-Pro skill level, Vision and Precision Passing will not reveal the passing icons (buttons) until you highlight a receiver. Of course, this doesn't mean you can't make a pass by just jamming a receiver's button, but the odds of completing that toss are low.

### Superstar Status

Vision and Precision passing's a big change, but that's not all that's kicking off for 06. NFL



Superstar mode is a hybrid of create-a-player and career modes that not only enables you to build a quarterback from the DNA on up but also asks you to guide him through his NFL career beginning from NFL draft day. You'll have to achieve fame by your gameplay on the field as well as deal with agents, endorsements, and other off-the-field issues on your way to the Hall of Fame.

Be prepared to stay up on your toes and keep your feet and thumbs moving with Madden NFL 06. —Brother Buzz

■ First Look ■ Developer: EA Tiburon  
■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Target release date: August

brobuzz.com

Madden NFL 06 is going for the QB force this season. Bro Buzz thumbs through the playbook.





brobuzz.com

Bro Buzz is pulling all-  
righters to graduate with  
honors in NCAA 06 Football.

## NCAA 06 Football

The NCAA Football franchise is arguably one of the best series of football games on the field. Despite its "non-pro" status, this is no underclassman, and NCAA 06 Football seeks to solidify that position by injecting more run-run into its rah-rah.

### Heisman Potential

This year, the game emphasizes star potential right from the opening kickoff with Run to the Heisman mode. Here you essentially create a player and then guide his collegiate career from high school star to Heisman Trophy winner. You can pick any position you like, but obviously running back and quarterback have the best Heisman potential. You have to excel in spring drills, live out of a dorm room, deal with rabid

fans, and, of course, star in the big games.

### Making an Impact

On the field, however, your player isn't the only guy who can make an impact. In fact, teams may have two or three Impact players who in a single play can change the course of a game. Impact players will be identified by an icon, and as you play with them, at certain times

their abilities get charged up to superstar status (not unlike in NFL Street). For example, if your impact player is a running back and your team absolutely needs to score on the next play, he's got the potential. It's up to you to help him reach it.

The game gives you a boost, too, through a special Impact cam gameplay view. This is sort of football bullet-time



where everything literally slows down around you so you can do that special thing you do.

The controls are also due for a few nice improvements. NCAA is borrowing the Hit Stick from Madden NFL so you can dish out punishment on offense and defense. Also, the right stick controls juke moves.

### The Need for Feed

Since maintaining excellence in college football programs is about recruiting, 06's Dynasty mode is getting some juice, too. Now you can recruit all year round and schedule on-campus visits at any time to attract top high school prospects. You can also designate "feeder" states around the country to develop a pipeline of young football talent into your program. EA Sports has been doing its homework for NCAA 06 Football. —*Brother Buzz*

First Look: Developer: EA Tiburon  
Publisher: EA Sports Target release date: July







## Phantasy Star Universe

Console RPG fans rejoice! Sega has announced a new Phantasy Star game to hit these shores next winter.

### A Universal Phantasy

Phantasy Star Universe is the long-awaited follow-up to the first-ever online console game, Phantasy Star Online for the Dreamcast, which many felt was defeated by its own innovation at its debut in 2000. While not as deep and detailed a game as PC online games at the time, PSO combined the ease of console gaming with real-time multiplayer in a bright, shiny sci-fi fantasy world that won over fans around the world.

### Planetscapes Online

Phantasy Star Universe will reflect the PSO style with simple combat and characters, but with a vastly expanded single-player game, which will boast at least 40 hours of play. The developers promise an engaging story with emotional depth to satisfy the heart of the RPG fan. But the main attraction of the game is in the multiplayer realm, which will take up where PSO left off. You'll be able to buddy up with up to five other gamers to roam three planets—delve into urban sprawl or wander under wide skies. New vehicles will open up far reaches of each world for exploration, and as Sega is committed to continually expanding the known universe with added content over the years, you may never want to escape this fantasy. —*GameGirl*

■ **First Look:** Developer and publisher: Sega  
■ **Target release date:** Winter 2006

## The Phantasy So Phar

### Phantasy Star 1988

The young freedom fighter Alis Landale beaves monsters and Robotops to avenge the death of her brother and bring a new era of peace to the world of Palma.

### Phantasy Star II 1989



On the neighboring world of Mota, a government agent named Rolf fights against the oppressive Mother brain computer.

### Phantasy Star III: Generations of Doom 1991

This massive game spanned seven worlds and two moons—and three generations of heroes.

### Phantasy Star IV: The End of the Millennium 1994



A dark game in which a lone boy, Chat, decides the fate of the galaxy. It remains as a spectacular ending to the original Phantasy Star games.

### Phantasy Star Collection 2001

Sega brought together the previous four games in one package as well as extras like TV commercials and artwork. In Japan, the collection was released in 1998.

### Phantasy Star Online, Episodes I–III 2000–2004



The series was finally revived in this revolutionary game that provided multilingual support and enabled players to either type in their messages or pick from a list of phrases—and emotions! It was one of the best-looking games of its time on the Dreamcast.





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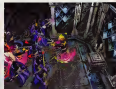
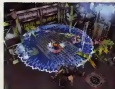


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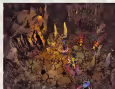
## X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse

Can't wait for the eventual release of *X-Men 3* in theaters? Don't worry, developer Raven will provide a respite from your angst with *X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse*. As in its predecessor, *X-Men Legends II* blends real-time combat with RPG elements, creating fast-paced action and the ability to upgrade your favorite mutants' abilities the more you use them. Of course, those jet-setting X-men don't limit themselves to boring locations, fighting it out in exotic locales like Egypt and the South Pole, along with such well-known Marvel locations as Genosha and the Infinite Factory—all of which are offered in the single-player mode and the newly implemented online multiplayer mode. With a total of 16 X-Men and Brotherhood characters from which to choose and over 100 enemies to face, including such notables as Lady Deathstrike and the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse, there will be more mutant-on-mutant action than you can shake an adamantium stick at. —*The Watcher*



■ **First Look** ■ Developer: Raven Software

■ **Publisher:** Activision ■ **Target release date:** Fall 2005



## Shining Force Neo

The name is a hint—this Neo is not like its *Shining Force* strategy-oriented predecessors. Here, the speed of your reflexes spells out your fate against up to 90 onscreen enemies at once. Sound chaotic yet? Add to that a team of 11 NPCs to help your character, a rookie knight named Max, as he takes on the demon portals polluting your homeworld one by one. Max can explore two familiar paths: the way of brawn or the way of brain. Either way, you can apply the "Force Arts" items strategically to beef up and balance his attributes. The visuals are the freshest aspect of the game so far; designed by former staff of the famed Studio Ghibli, the game harmoniously integrates a palette of lovely soft colors with elegantly sketchy outlines. At this stage, it's not clear whether the action-packed sequences will add a dash of excitement or will merely get in the way as you hack and slash in search of the story. A

Force to be reckoned with? —*GameGirl*

■ **First Look** ■ Developer and publisher: Sega  
■ **Target release date:** Fall 2005



## Makai Kingdom: Chronicles Of the Sacred Tome

You've endured countless random battle encounters in your quest to save the world from ultimate destruction time and again. But what if you screwed up? You'd have Makai Kingdom. Über-evil demon Lord Zetta suddenly finds himself in the awkward position of having accidentally obliterated his own earthly realm in apocalyptic rage. With the help of a few fellow masters of chaos, he has to humbly rebuild and battle his way back up the chain of command. Many of the tactical battle mechanics were similar to those in the preceding *Phantom Brave* and just as absorbing, including the gridless, free-roaming battle map and customizable characters and classes. The deliciously melodramatic Japanese voice acting and the candy-colored anime art direction—an effective foil for dark plot themes—whipped up a frothy concoction that amounts to a witty parody of the tactical RPG genre, tongue held firmly in cheek. —*GameGirl*

■ **Ready-to-Go** ■ Developer: Nippon Ichi ■ **Publisher:** 185 ■ **Target release date:** July



## Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King

**D**oraKyu, as it's affectionately nicknamed in Japan, may have a legion of loyalists there, but Stateside it's been overshadowed by the likes of Final Fantasy.

Dragon Quest VIII aims to change that by taking the classic adventure series into the third dimension with a

wide-open world explorable from sunrise to sunset and populated with towns and castles galore. You'll collect quirky party members and go up against whimsical enemies in your quest to free the kingdom from the clutches of time. While there will be no surprises from either the combat (turn-based, naturally) or the story, we do expect a solidly crafted game with all the classic, familiar role-playing elements. Famed designer Akira "Dragon Ball Z" Toriyama created the cel-shaded characters. —GameGirl

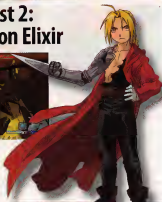
■ **Update:** ■ Developer: Level 5  
■ Publisher: Square Enix  
■ Target release date: Fall 2005



## Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of the Crimson Elixir

**H**ot on the heels of Fullmetal Alchemist and the Broken Angel comes the sequel Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of the Crimson Elixir. What's that you say? You don't care? Well tough, Square Enix is releasing this follow-up to a lackluster Japanese port whether you like it or not. Sure, the story is still convoluted and devoid of depth, the combat is stiff and basic, and there's enough dialogue to make even Quentin Tarantino gag, but to make up for all these shortcomings the game offers improvements with cel-shaded graphics, an expanded arsenal of weapons, new alchemy attacks, and enhanced A.I. for your sidekick brother, hopefully making him useful in combat rather than a walking doorstop. Of course, no anime-based game would be complete without footage from its respective series, and this game won't disappoint with 30 minutes of original animation created exclusively for the game. —The Watcher

■ **Hands On:** ■ Developer: Redix  
■ Publisher: Square Enix ■ Target release date: Summer 2005



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# Romance of the Three Kingdoms X



Historical strategy games have always been a hardcore niche genre—and while *Romance of the Three Kingdoms IX* tried to change that with its simplified mechanics, the pendulum has swung completely in the opposite direction for this latest installment. ROTTK buffs beware: This one can be overwhelmingly complex.

## From Micro to Macro

For better or for worse, the game tries to do everything that fans have wanted. Play as an individual officer instead of a force, building up



**PRO TIP:** Make sure you have at least 10 Action Points left when attacking gates—this will let you move out for other units to continue the attack.

relationships and fame? Done. Engage in grandiose, large-scale military campaigns? Yes! The problem is that a complex web of menus and options muddles it all. Even though the tutorial does an admirable job of getting Sangokushu neophytes acquainted with the gameplay, the steep learning curve will still prove to be mind-bogglingly intimidating. The dual tutorial alone takes well over five minutes to get through.

## Sparten Saga

Catering to the old-school fan base, the game retains its somber turn-based battles and turn-based land management. Stripped of such advanced technologies as polygons, ROTTKX is a PlayStation-level title at best in terms of pushing the envelope. Localization of Japanese games has never been a forte for Koei, and this U.S. version delivers corny lines that you'd expect from a history-class educational video.

Even with its conservative mechanics, bland graphics, and user-unfriendly interface, the sheer depth of the game will still appeal to the faithful who've persevered for nine sequels—however few they may be.—*Funky Zealot*

**KEY MOMENT:** Finishing off an epic battle, going back to your home, and having your wife greet you when you go inside



**PRO TIP:** It may take a couple of tries to take over a free city with your Big Red Army. The more attacks you conduct, the weaker city defenses become.



**PRO TIP:** Talking is key in building friendships with other officers. Persistence pays off. Keep bugging them.



Developer and publisher: Koei • \$49.99  
Available now • Strategy • 1 player • ESRB T

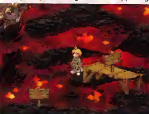
# Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana



You'd have to be a die-hard devotee of the art of the Japanese RPG to find delight in the most recent Atelier game from NIS, the rank-and-file gamer will find it as slow as mud and about as thrilling.

## The Usual Suspects

The story line is even thinner than the usual soap-opera mishmash that drenches this genre: A teenaged boy finds himself unwittingly the savior of a mysterious girl, who is an amalgam of Final Fantasy heroines—and yes, she carries the requisite plot-twisting secret. The supporting



**PRO TIP:** A jumping RPG? Yes! Leap over obstacles to get through maze-like dungeons.



**PRO TIP:** Heal up and save your game at tent spots. Keep in mind that Lita's mana won't be healed this way.



**PRO TIP:** If you treat your mana fairies right, they can make more items—keep them happy and healthy by giving them gifts.

cast is also ported from familiar games: the bumbling blowhard captain of the guard, the prettily handsome swordsman with long silvery hair, and a flustered spunky little spirits. All portrayals are strictly standard anime: big eyes, big hair. And while it's refreshing to have the option of hearing the original Japanese voice acting, this is recommended only for those with a high tolerance for very squeaky voices.

## Making Your Mana Work for You

The game doesn't really pick up until several hours into it, when it finally grants you access to some of the most important functions, such as the ability to equip Mana, synthesize Mana crystals to upgrade and customize weapons, and create better Mana items. At this point, some interesting new areas on the map open up as well. Unfortunately, the lack of a global-map function and the relentless linearity of the plot inhibit real exploration. By far, the most fun to be had is in creating the menus at various retail

food establishments by synthesizing tantalizing new drinks and dishes. How much alchemy is like cooking! Ultimately, the late-game payoff is a long time coming, and the narrative never gathers the emotional density necessary to truly engage the player. The bloom on *Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana* fades all too quickly.—*GameGirl*

**KEY MOMENT:** I was so excited when Arlin joined my party...but then he turned out to be a chump, not the champ who'd beaten my lead character moments before.



Developer: NIS • Publisher: NIS • \$49.99  
Available now • RPG • 1 player • ESRB T

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XBOX

DOOM 3



**Invincibility:** During gameplay, press and hold L, and then press X, Y, B, A. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect and you will be invincible.

CF Bailey—Elkton, MD

PLAYSTATION 2

BROTHERS IN ARMS:  
ROAD TO HILL 30



**Unlock All Levels:** Create a new player profile with **BAKERSDOORN** (case-sensitive) as the name. If you entered it correctly, all levels will be unlocked at the level-select screen.

KILLZONE



**Unlock All Movies:** At the main menu, press and hold L1, and then

press O, X, △, □, O, □. If you entered the code correctly, all movies will be available.

LEGO STAR WARS



**Unlock Characters for Purchase:** At Dex's Diner, select Codes and then enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

Battle Droid:	98700X
Battle Droid (Commander):	K113K5
Battle Droid (Geonosian):	L442U6
Battle Droid (Security):	KP395A
Bobba Fett:	L4411Y
Clone:	P891L6
Clone (Episode II):	8R43J8
Clone (Episode III Pilot):	3XU72E
Clone (Episode III Swamp):	9767P9
Clone (Episode III Walker):	8568Z5

Count Dooku:	180GHS
Darth Maul:	W1570X
Darth Sidious:	A12PAM
Disguised Clone:	V8R320
Droid-Kar:	0H3820
General Grievous:	8F322Y
General Grievous (Bodyguard):	87Y39Z
Geonosis:	1307NB
Gank Droid:	06382A
Jango Fett:	PL478N
Ki-Adi-Mundi:	0P588Y
Kit Fisto:	C8R954
Lumina Unduli:	A725X4
Mace Windu (Episode III):	NS952L
Padme:	820J7D
PK Droid:	2840J0
Princess Leia:	8BQ428
Rebel Trooper:	L56Y0Z
Royal Guard:	2P43JA
Sheak T:	8UN982
Super Battle Droid:	X5NR2L



**Unlock Gameplay Extras:** At Dex's Diner, select Codes and then enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

Big Blasters:	107284
Brushes:	8K8C81
Classic Blaster:	L442U6
Invincibility:	4PK280
Mind Detector:	L01158
Moustaches:	3P324N
Purple:	YD770C
Silhouettes:	NS993Q
Silly Blasters:	NR17NL
Tea Cups:	POC8AT

NARC



During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**All Drugs:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, and L3 repeatedly.  
**All Weapons:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, and R3 repeatedly.  
**Invincibility:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, and X repeatedly.  
**The Refinery:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, O, and X repeatedly.  
**Show Stashes:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, and Left repeatedly.  
**Unlimited Ammo:** Simultaneously press L1, R1, and Down repeatedly.

XBOX

DOOM 3



**Skip Levels:** During gameplay, press and hold L, and then press B, A, X, Y. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect.



**WIN!**

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NARC

During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

**All Drugs:** Simultaneously press L, R, and Left Thumbstick repeatedly.

**All Weapons:** Simultaneously press L, R, and Right Thumbstick repeatedly.

**Invincibility:** Simultaneously press L, R, and A repeatedly.

**The Refinery:** Simultaneously press L, R, A, and X repeatedly.

**Show Stashes:** Simultaneously press L, R, and Left repeatedly.

**Unlimited Ammo:** Simultaneously press L, R, and Down repeatedly.

#### SPY VS. SPY



At the main menu, select Extras and then select Cheats. At the Cheats screen, press X to select the password-entry screen and then enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

All Hidden Maps	FOUNTAIN
All Multiplayer Levels	MADKAG
All Spy Attachments	OLDBUSSE
All Story Maps	ANTONIO
Invincibility	AMMO
Permanent Fairy	FAIRY

#### MULTIPLATFORM

SSX 3



At the Main Menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, choose Enter Cheat. Enter any of the following codes to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll automatically return to the Options screen. Select Done to return to the Setup Character screen and then choose Rider Details to find the unlocked characters.

Accessories are color sensitive.

All Peaks	biggercheat?
All Playlist Songs	dysperstae
Art	naturalconcept
Boards	graphideLight

#### MULTIPLATFORM

MX VS. ATV UNLEASHED



At the main menu, select Options and then select Cheat Codes. At the Cheat Code screen, enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll see a confirming message onscreen.

1,000,000 Points	BROKENAJOLE
50cc Bike Class	KENNY20
All Freestyle Tracks	WACK IT
All Gear	MAJESTROBE
All Machines	LEADFOOT
All Pro Riders	WARRABE
Unlock Everything	TOOLSLAY

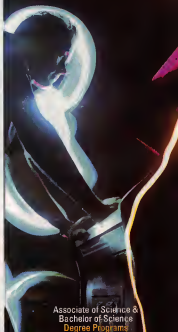


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Number crunching was never our strong suit, but then that's why we partnered with the most reputable data company around. The NPD Group provides us with innumerable video-game tidbits, giving you insight into the trends of the gaming industry.

## Top 10 Best-Selling Console Video-Game Titles

# March 2005

TITLE	PLATFORM	LAST MONTH
1. Gran Turismo 4 Sony	PlayStation 2	1
2. MVP Baseball 2005 EA Sports	PlayStation 2	4
3. Fight Night Round 2 EA Sports	PlayStation 2	NEW
4. Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening Capcom	PlayStation 2	NEW
5. Star Wars Republic Commando LucasArts	Xbox	NEW
6. God of War Sony	PlayStation 2	NEW
7. Fight Night Round 2 EA Sports	Xbox	NEW
8. ESPN Major League Baseball 2K5 2K Sports	PlayStation 2	NEW
9. Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 Ubisoft	Xbox	NEW
10. MVP Baseball 2005 EA Sports	Xbox	NEW

Source: The NPD Group/WPD Funworld/Point-of-Sale

3/7



Our predictability in the office has gone way down because of this skilled pug. Whether it's the more-than-victorious, tight controls, or just plain addictive gameplay, this sequel is a prize fighter any way you look at it. We already can't wait for Round 2.

6



The gods must know something about gaming as this action/adventure is rife with true creative innovation. Oh yeah, it's definitely mature, too—but those bloody and sexual scenes shouldn't take away from the rest of what God of War has to offer. We predict it will rise in the ranks come next month.

## Why GP Editors Have a Hard Time Making New Friends

1. Halo 2 version 1.1 (Xbox)
2. God of War (PS2)
3. Forza Motorsport (Xbox)
4. Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30 (Xbox)
5. Metal Slug 4 and 5 Bundle Pack (PS2)
6. Fight Night Round 2 (PS2)
7. Gran Turismo 4 (PS2)
8. SWAT 4 (PC)
9. Tekken 5 (PS2)
10. World of Warcraft (PC)

# 1 Gran Turismo 4



The best driving experience without really driving equals Gran Turismo 4. This long-awaited (and constantly delayed) driving simulator was certainly worth the wait as it pushes the PS2's power right next to the double yellow lines. Sure, online play was promised but never delivered, and the visual presentation could have been more polished. Still, with the amount of authentic vehicle customizations and heated race competitions, Gran Turismo 4 deserves to stay at number one.

## Top 10 Portable Video-Game Titles for March 2005

1. Twisted Metal: Head On (PSP)
2. Need for Speed Underground Rivals (PSP)
3. WarioWare: Touch! (DS)
4. Untold Legends: Brotherhood of the Blade (PSP)
5. Robots (GBA)
6. The Incredibles (GBA)
7. Yoshi Touch & Go (DS)
8. Super Mario 64 (DS)
9. Metal Gear Acid (PSP)
10. Wipeout Pure (PSP)

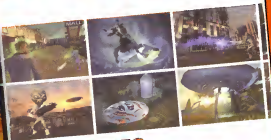
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PlayStation 2



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